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SARDANAPALUS,

A TRAGEDY.

THE TWO FOSCARI,

A TRAGEDY.

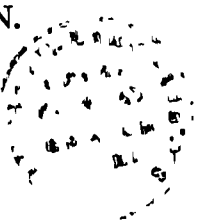
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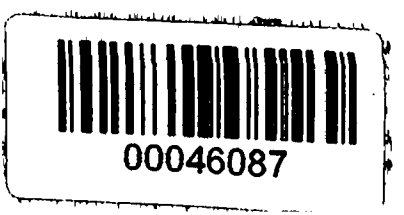
A MYSTERY.

BY LORD BYRON.



LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.
1821.

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PREFACE.

In publishing the following Tragedies I have only to repeat that they were not composed with the most remote view to the stage.

On the attempt made by the Managers in a former instance, the public opinion has been already expressed.

With regard to my own private feelings, as it seems that they are to stand for nothing, I shall say nothing.

For the historical foundation of the following compositions, the reader is referred to the Notes.

The Author has in one instance attempted to preserve, and in the other to approach the "unities;" conceiving that with any very distant departure from them, there may be poetry, but can be no drama. He is aware of the unpopu-

larity of this notion in present English literature; but it is not a system of his own, being merely an opinion, which, not very long ago, was the law of literature throughout the world, and is still so in the more civilized parts of it. But "Nous avons changé tout cela," and are reaping the advantages of the change. The writer is far from conceiving that any thing he can adduce by personal precept or example can at all approach his regular, or even irregular predecessors: he is merely giving a reason why he preferred the more regular formation of a structure, however feeble, to an entire abandonment of all rules whatsoever. Where he has failed, the failure is in the architect,—and not in the art.

SARDANAPALUS.

In this tragedy it has been my intention to follow the account of Diodorus Siculus, reducing it, however, to such dramatic regularity as I best could, and trying to approach the unities. I therefore suppose the rebellion to explode and succeed in one day by a sudden conspiracy, instead of the long war of the history.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

SARDANAPALUS, King of Nineveh and Assyria, &c.
ARBACES, the Mede who aspired to the Throne.
BELESES, a Chaldean and Soothsayer.
SALEMENES, the King's Brother-in-law.
ALTADA, an Assyrian Officer of the Palace.
PANIA.
ZAMES.
SFERO.
BALEA.

WOMEN.

ZARINA, the Queen.
MYRRHA, an Ionian female Slave, and the Favourite of SARDANAPALUS.
Women composing the Harem of SARDANAPALUS, Guards, Attendants, Chaldean Priests, Medes, &c. &c.

Scene—a Hall in the Royal Palace of Nineveh.

SARDANAPALUS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Hall in the Palace.

SALEMENES (*solus*).

He hath wrong'd his queen, but still he is her lord;
He hath wrong'd my sister, still he is my brother;
He hath wrong'd his people, still he is their sovereign,
And I must be his friend as well as subject:
He must not perish thus. I will not see
The blood of Nimrod and Semiramis
Sink in the earth, and thirteen hundred years
Of empire ending like a shepherd's tale;
He must be roused. In his effeminate heart
There is a careless courage which corruption
Has not all quench'd, and latent energies,
Repress by circumstance, but not destroy'd—
Steep'd, but not drown'd, in deep voluptuousness.
If born a peasant, he had been a man
To have reach'd an empire; to an empire born,

He will bequeath none; nothing but a name,
Which his sons will not prize in heritage:—
Yet, not all lost, even yet he may redeem
His sloth and shame, by only being that
Which he should be, as easily as the thing
He should not be and is. Were it less toil
To sway his nations than consume his life?
To head an army than to rule a harem?
He sweats in palling pleasures, dulls his soul,
And saps his goodly strength, in toils which yield not
Health like the chase, nor glory like the war—
He must be roused. Alas! there is no sound
[*Sound of soft music heard from within.*
To rouse him short of thunder. Hark! the lute,
The lyre, the timbrel; the lascivious tinklings
Of lulling instruments, the softening voices
Of women, and of beings less than women,
Must chime in to the echo of his revel,
While the great king of all we know of earth
Lolls crown'd with roses, and his diadem
Lies negligently by to be caught up
By the first manly hand which dares to snatch it.
Lo, where they come! already I perceive
The reeking odours of the perfumed trains,
And see the bright gems of the glittering girls,
Who are his comrades and his council, flash
Along the gallery, and amidst the damsels,
As femininely garbed, and scarce less female,
The grandson of Semiramis, the man-queen.—

He comes! Shall I await him? yes, and front him,
And tell him what all good men tell each other,
Speaking of him and his. They come, the slaves,
Led by the monarch subject to his slaves.

SCENE II.

Enter SARDANAPALUS *effeminately dressed, his Head crowned with Flowers, and his Robe negligently flowing, attended by a Train of Women and young Slaves.*

SARDANAPALUS (*speaking to some of his attendants*).
Let the pavilion over the Euphrates
Be garlanded, and lit, and furnish'd forth
For an especial banquet; at the hour
Of midnight we will sup there: see nought wanting,
And bid the galley be prepared. There is
A cooling breeze which crisps the broad clear river:
We will embark anon. Fair nymphs, who deign
To share the soft hours of Sardanapalus,
We 'll meet again in that the sweetest hour,
When we shall gather like the stars above us,
And you will form a heaven as bright as theirs;
Till then, let each be mistress of her time,
And thou, my own Ionian Myrrha, choose,
Wilt thou along with them or me?

MYRRHA.

My lord——

SARDANAPALUS.

My lord, my life! why answerest thou so coldly?
It is the curse of kings to be so answered.
Rule thy own hours, thou rulest mine—say, wouldst thou
Accompany our guests, or charm away
The moments from me?

MYRRHA.

The king's choice is mine.

SARDANAPALUS.

I pray thee say not so: my chiefest joy.
Is to contribute to thine every wish.
I do not dare to breathe my own desire,
Lest it should clash with thine; for thou art still
Too prompt to sacrifice thy thoughts for others.

MYRRHA.

I would remain: I have no happiness
Save in beholding thine; yet——

SARDANAPALUS.

Yet! what YET?
Thy own sweet will shall be the only barrier
Which ever rises betwixt thee and me.

MYRRHA.

I think the present is the wonted hour
Of council; it were better I retire.

SALEMENES (*comes forward and says*)

The Ionian slave says well, let her retire.

SARDANAPALUS.

Who answers? How now, brother?

SALEMENES.

The *queen*'s brother,
And your most faithful vassal, royal lord.

SARDANAPALUS (*addressing his train*).

As I have said, let all dispose their hours
Till midnight, when again we pray your presence.

[*The court retiring.*

(*To* MYRRHA, *who is going.*) Myrrha! I thought *thou* wouldst remain.

MYRRHA.

Great king,
Thou didst not say so.

SARDANAPALUS.

But *thou* lookedst it;
I know each glance of those Ionic eyes,
Which said thou wouldst not leave me.

MYRRHA.

Sire! your brother——

SALEMENES.

His *consort*'s brother, minion of Ionia!
How darest *thou* name *me* and not blush?

SARDANAPALUS.

Not blush!
Thou hast no more eyes than heart to make her crimson
Like to the dying day on Caucasus,
Where sunset tints the snow with rosy shadows,
And then reproach her with thine own cold blindness,
Which will not see it. What, in tears, my Myrrha?

SALEMENES.

Let them flow on; she weeps for more than one,
And is herself the cause of bitterer tears.

SARDANAPALUS.

Cursed be he who caused those tears to flow!

SALEMENES.

Curse not thyself—millions do that already.

SARDANAPALUS.

Thou dost forget thee: make me not remember
I am a monarch.

SALEMENES.

Would thou couldst!

MYRRHA.

My sovereign,
I pray, and thou too, prince, permit my absence,

SARDANAPALUS.

Since it must be so, and this churl has check'd
Thy gentle spirit, go; but recollect
That we must forthwith meet: I had rather lose
An empire than thy presence.

[*Exit* MYRRHA.

SALEMENES.

It may be,
Thou wilt lose both, and both for ever!

SARDANAPALUS.

Brother,
I can at least command myself, who listen
To language such as this; yet urge me not
Beyond my easy nature.

SALEMENES.

'Tis beyond
That easy, far too easy, idle nature,
Which I would urge thee. Oh that I could rouse thee!
Though 'twere against myself.

SARDANAPALUS.

By the god Baal!
The man would make me tyrant.

SALEMENES.

So thou art.
Thinkst thou there is no tyranny but that
Of blood and chains? The despotism of vice—
The weakness and the wickedness of luxury—
The negligence—the apathy—the evils
Of sensual sloth—produce ten thousand tyrants,
Whose delegated cruelty surpasses
The worst acts of one energetic master,
However harsh and hard in his own bearing.
The false and fond examples of thy lusts
Corrupt no less than they oppress, and sap
In the same moment all thy pageant power
And those who should sustain it; so that whether
A foreign foe invade, or civil broil
Distract within, both will alike prove fatal:
The first thy subjects have no heart to conquer;
The last they rather would assist than vanquish.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why what makes thee the mouth-piece of the people?

SALEMENES.

Forgiveness of the queen, my sister's wrongs;

A natural love unto my infant nephews;
Faith to the king, a faith he may need shortly,
In more than words; respect for Nimrod's line;
Also, another thing thou knowest not.

SARDANAPALUS.

What's that?

SALEMENES.

To thee an unknown word.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yet speak it,
I love to learn.

SALEMENES.

Virtue.

SARDANAPALUS.

Not know the word!
Never was word yet rung so in my ears—
Worse than the rabble's shout, or splitting trumpet;
I've heard thy sister talk of nothing else.

SALEMENES.

To change the irksome theme, then, hear of vice.

SARDANAPALUS.

From whom?

SALEMENES.

Even from the winds, if thou couldst listen
Unto the echoes of the nation's voice.

SARDANAPALUS.

Come, I'm indulgent as thou knowest, patient
As thou hast often proved—speak out, what moves thee?

SALEMENES.

Thy peril.

SARDANAPALUS.

Say on.

SALEMENES.

Thus, then: all the nations,
For they are many, whom thy father left
In heritage, are loud in wrath against thee.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Gainst *me!* What would the slaves?

SALEMENES.

A king.

SARDANAPALUS.

And what
Am I then?

SALEMENES.

In their eyes a nothing; but
In mine a man who might be something still.

SARDANAPALUS.

The railing drunkards! why, what would they have?
Have they not peace and plenty?

SALEMENES.

Of the first,
More than is glorious; of the last, far less
Than the king recks of.

SARDANAPALUS.

Whose then is the crime,
But the false satraps, who provide no better?

SALEMENES.

And somewhat in the monarch who ne'er looks
Beyond his palace walls, or if he stirs
Beyond them, 'tis but to some mountain palace,

Till summer heats wear down. O glorious Baal!
Who built up this vast empire, and wert made
A god, or at the least shinest like a god
Through the long centuries of thy renown,
This, thy presumed descendant, ne'er beheld
As king the kingdoms thou didst leave as hero,
Won with thy blood, and toil, and time, and peril!
For what? to furnish imposts for a revel,
Or multiplied extortions for a minion.

SARDANAPALUS.

I understand thee—thou wouldst have me go
Forth as a conqueror. By all the stars
Which the Chaldeans read! the restless slaves
Deserve that I should curse them with their wishes,
And lead them forth to glory.

SALEMENES.

Wherefore not?
Semiramis—a woman only—led
These our Assyrians to the solar shores
Of Ganges.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis most true. And *how* return'd?

SALEMENES.

Why, like a *man*—a hero; baffled, but
Not vanquish'd. With but twenty guards, she made
Good her retreat to Bactria.

SARDANAPALUS.

And how many
Left she behind in India to the vultures?

SALEMENES.

Our annals say not.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then I will say for them—
That she had better woven within her palace
Some twenty garments, than with twenty guards
Have fled to Bactria, leaving to the ravens,
And wolves, and men—the fiercer of the three,
Her myriads of fond subjects. Is *this* glory?
Then let me live in ignominy ever.

SALEMENES.

All warlike spirits have not the same fate.
Semiramis, the glorious parent of
A hundred kings, although she fail'd in India,
Brought Persia, Media, Bactria, to the realm
Which she once sway'd—and thou *mightst* sway.

SARDANAPALUS.

I *sway* them—
She but subdued them.

SALEMENES.

It may be ere long
That they will need her sword more than your sceptre.

SARDANAPALUS.

There was a certain Bacchus, was there not?
I've heard my Greek girls speak of such—they say
He was a god, that is, a Grecian god,
An idol foreign to Assyria's worship,
Who conquer'd this same golden realm of Ind
Thou prat'st of, where Semiramis was vanquish'd.

SALEMENES.

I have heard of such a man; and thou perceiv'st
That he is deem'd a god for what he did.

SARDANAPALUS.

And in his godship I will honour him—
Not much as man. What, ho! my cupbearer!

SALEMENES.

What means the king?

SARDANAPALUS.

To worship your new god
And ancient conqueror. Some wine, I say.

Enter Cupbearer.

SARDANAPALUS (*addressing the Cupbearer*).

Bring me the golden goblet thick with gems,
Which bears the name of Nimrod's chalice. Hence,
Fill full, and bear it quickly. [*Exit Cupbearer.*

SALEMENES.

Is this moment
A fitting one for the resumption of
Thy yet unslept-off revels?

Re-enter Cupbearer, with wine.

SARDANAPALUS (*taking the cup from him*).

Noble kinsman,
If these barbarian Greeks of the far shores
And skirts of these our realms lie not, this Bacchus
Conquer'd the whole of India, did he not?

SALEMENES.

He did, and thence was deem'd a deity.

SARDANAPALUS.

Not so:—of all his conquests a few columns,
Which may be his, and might be mine, if I
Thought them worth purchase and conveyance, are
The landmarks of the seas of gore he shed,
The realms he wasted, and the hearts he broke.
But here, here in this goblet is his title
To immortality—the immortal grape
From which he first express'd the soul, and gave
To gladden that of man, as some atonement
For the victorious mischiefs he had done.
Had it not been for this, he would have been.
A mortal still in name as in his grave;
And, like my ancestor Semiramis,
A sort of semi-glorious human monster.
Here 's that which deified him—let it now
Humanize thee; my surly, chiding brother,
Pledge me to the Greek god!

SALEMENES.

For all thy realms
I would not so blaspheme our country's creed.

SARDANAPALUS.

That is to say, thou thinkest him a hero,
That he shed blood by oceans; and no god,
Because he turn'd a fruit to an enchantment,
Which cheers the sad, revives the old, inspires
The young, makes Weariness forget his toil,
And Fear her danger; opens a new world

When this, the present, palls. Well, then, *I* pledge thee
And *him* as a true man, who did his utmost
In good or evil to surprise mankind. [*Drinks.*

SALEMENES.

Wilt thou resume a revel at this hour?

SARDANAPALUS.

And if I did, 'twere better than a trophy,
Being bought without a tear. But that is not
My present purpose: since thou wilt not pledge me,
Continue what thou pleasest.
(*To the Cupbearer*) Boy, retire.
[*Exit Cupbearer.*

SALEMENES.

I would but have recall'd thee from thy dream:
Better by me awaken'd than rebellion.

SARDANAPALUS.

Who should rebel? or why? what cause? pretext?
I am the lawful king, descended from
A race of kings who knew no predecessors.
What have I done to thee, or to the people,
That thou shouldst rail, or they rise up against me?

SALEMENES.

Of what thou hast done to me, I speak not.

SARDANAPALUS.

But
Thou think'st that I have wrong'd the queen: is't not so?

SALEMENES.

Think! Thou hast wrong'd her!

SARDANAPALUS.

Patience, prince, and hear me.

She has all power and splendour of her station,
Respect, the tutelage of Assyria's heirs,
The homage and the appanage of sovereignty.
I married her as monarchs wed—for state,
And loved her as most husbands love their wives.
If she or thou supposedst I could link me
Like a Chaldean peasant to his mate,
Ye knew nor me, nor monarchs, nor mankind.

SALEMENES.

I pray thee, change the theme; my blood disdains
Complaint, and Salemenes' sister seeks not
Reluctant love even from Assyria's lord!
Nor would she deign to accept divided passion
With foreign strumpets and Ionian slaves.
The queen is silent.

SARDANAPALUS.

And why not her brother?

SALEMENES.

I only echo thee the voice of empires,
Which he who long neglects not long will govern.

SARDANAPALUS.

The ungrateful and ungracious slaves! they murmur
Because I have not shed their blood, nor led them
To dry into the desert's dust by myriads,
Or whiten with their bones the banks of Ganges;
Nor decimated them with savage laws,
Nor sweated them to build up pyramids,
Or Babylonian walls.

SALEMENES.

Yet these are trophies

More worthy of a people and their prince
Than songs, and lutes, and feasts, and concubines,
And lavish'd treasures, and contemned virtues.

SARDANAPALUS.

Or for my trophies I have founded cities:
There's Tarsus and Anchialus, both built
In one day—what could that blood-loving beldame,
My martial grandam, chaste Semiramis,
Do more, except destroy them?

SALEMENES.

'Tis most true;
I own thy merit in those founded cities,
Built for a whim, recorded with a verse
Which shames both them and thee to coming ages.

SARDANAPALUS.

Shame me! By Baal, the cities, though well built,
Are not more goodly than the verse! Say what
Thou wilt 'gainst me, my mode of life or rule,
But nothing 'gainst the truth of that brief record
Why, those few lines contain the history
Of all things human; hear—" Sardanapalus
" The king, and son of Anacyndaraxes,
" In one day built Anchialus and Tarsus.
" Eat, drink, and love; the rest 's not worth a fillip."

SALEMENES.

A worthy moral, and a wise inscription,
For a king to put up before his subjects!

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh, thou wouldst have me doubtless set up edicts—
" Obey the king—contribute to his treasure—

" Recruit his phalanx—spill your blood at bidding—
" Fall down and worship, or get up and toil."
Or thus—" Sardanapalus on this spot
" Slew fifty thousand of his enemies.
" These are their sepulchres, and this his trophy."
I leave such things to conquerors; enough
For me, if I can make my subjects feel
The weight of human misery less, and glide
Ungroaning to the tomb; I take no licence
Which I deny to them. We all are men.

SALEMENES.

Thy sires have been revered as gods——

SARDANAPALUS.

In dust
And death, where they are neither gods nor men.
Talk not of such to me! the worms are gods;
At least they banqueted upon your gods,
And died for lack of farther nutriment.
Those gods were merely men; look to their issue—
I feel a thousand mortal things about me,
But nothing godlike, unless it may be
The thing which you condemn, a disposition
To love and to be merciful, to pardon
The follies of my species, and (that's human)
To be indulgent to my own.

SALEMENES.

Alas!
The doom of Nineveh is seal'd.—Woe—woe
To the unrivall'd city!

SARDANAPALUS.

What dost dread?

SALEMENES.

Thou art guarded by thy foes: in a few hours
The tempest may break out which overwhelms thee,
And thine and mine; and in another day
What *is* shall be the past of Belus' race.

SARDANAPALUS.

What must we dread?

SALEMENES.

Ambitious treachery,
Which has environ'd thee with snares; but yet
There is resource: empower me with thy signet
To quell the machinations, and I lay
The heads of thy chief foes before thy feet.

SARDANAPALUS.

The heads—how many?

SALEMENES.

Must I stay to number
When even thine own's in peril? Let me go;
Give me thy signet—trust me with the rest.

SARDANAPALUS.

I will trust no man with unlimited lives.
When we take those from others, we nor know
What we have taken, nor the thing we give.

SALEMENES.

Wouldst thou not take their lives who seek for thine?

SARDANAPALUS.

That's a hard question.—But, I answer Yes.

Cannot the thing be done without? Who are they
Whom thou suspectest?—Let them be arrested.

SALEMENES.

I would thou wouldst not ask me; the next moment
Will send my answer through thy babbling troop
Of paramours, and thence fly o'er the palace,
Even to the city, and so baffle all.—
Trust me.

SARDANAPALUS.

Thou knowest I have done so ever;
Take thou the signet. [*Gives the signet.*

SALEMENES.

I have one more request.—

SARDANAPALUS.

Name it.

SALEMENES.

That thou this night forbear the banquet
In the pavilion over the Euphrates.

SARDANAPALUS.

Forbear the banquet! Not for all the plotters
That ever shook a kingdom! Let them come,
And do their worst: I shall not blench for them;
Nor rise the sooner; nor forbear the goblet;
Nor crown me with a single rose the less;
Nor lose one joyous hour.—I fear them not.

SALEMENES.

But thou wouldst arm thee, wouldst thou not, if needful?

SARDANAPALUS.

Perhaps. I have the goodliest armour, and
A sword of such a temper; and a bow

And javelin, which might furnish Nimrod forth:
A little heavy, but yet not unwieldy.
And now I think on't, 'tis long since I 've used them,
Even in the chase. Hast ever seen them, brother?

SALEMENES.

Is this a time for such fantastic trifling?—
If need be, wilt thou wear them?

SARDANAPALUS.

Will I not?—
Oh! if it must be so, and these rash slaves
Will not be ruled with less, I 'll use the sword
Till they shall wish it turn'd into a distaff.

SALEMENES.

They say, thy sceptre 's turn'd to that already.

SARDANAPALUS.

That 's false! but let them say so: the old Greeks,
Of whom our captives often sing, related
The same of their chief hero, Hercules,
Because he loved a Lydian queen: thou seest
The populace of all the nations seize
Each calumny they can to sink their sovereigns.

SALEMENES.

They did not speak thus of thy fathers.

SARDANAPALUS.

No;
They dared not. They were kept to toil and combat,
And never changed their chains but for their armour;
Now they have peace and pastime, and the licence
To revel and to rail; it irks me not.
I would not give the smile of one fair girl

For all the popular breath that e'er divided
A name from nothing. What are the rank tongues
Of this vile herd, grown insolent with feeding,
That I should prize their noisy praise, or dread
Their noisome clamour?

SALEMENES.

You have said they are men;
As such their hearts are something.

SARDANAPALUS.

So my dogs' are;
And better, as more faithful:—but, proceed;
Thou hast my signet:—since they are tumultuous,
Let them be temper'd, yet not roughly, till
Necessity enforce it. I hate all pain,
Given or received; we have enough within us,
The meanest vassal as the loftiest monarch,
Not to add to each other's natural burthen
Of mortal misery, but rather lessen,
By mild reciprocal alleviation,
The fatal penalties imposed on life;
But this they know not, or they will not know.
I have, by Baal! done all I could to soothe them:
I made no wars, I added no new imposts,
I interfered not with their civic lives,
I let them pass their days as best might suit them,
Passing my own as suited me.

SALEMENES.

Thou stopp'st
Short of the duties of a king; and therefore
They say thou art unfit to be a monarch.

SARDANAPALUS.

They lie.—Unhappily, I am unfit
To be aught save a monarch; else for me,
The meanest Mede might be the king instead.

SALEMENES.

There is one Mede, at least, who seeks to be so.

SARDANAPALUS.

What mean'st thou?—'tis thy secret; thou desirest
Few questions, and I'm not of curious nature.
Take the fit steps; and, since necessity
Requires, I sanction and support thee. Ne'er
Was man who more desired to rule in peace
The peaceful only; if they rouse me, better
They had conjured up stern Nimrod from his ashes,
"The mighty hunter." I will turn these realms
To one wide desert chase of brutes, who *were*,
But *would* no more, by their own choice, be human.
What they have found me, they belie; *that which*
They yet may find me—shall defy their wish
To speak it worse; and let them thank themselves.

SALEMENES.

Then thou at last canst feel?

SARDANAPALUS.

Feel! who feels not
Ingratitude?

SALEMENES.

I will not pause to answer
With words, but deeds. Keep thou awake that energy
Which sleeps at times, but is not dead within thee,

And thou may'st yet be glorious in thy reign,
As powerful in thy realm. Farewell!

[*Exit* SALAMENES.

SARDANAPALUS (*solus*).

Farewell!
He's gone; and on his finger bears my signet,
Which is to him a sceptre. He is stern
As I am heedless; and the slaves deserve
To feel a master. What may be the danger,
I know not:—he hath found it, let him quell it.
Must I consume my life—this little life—
In guarding against all may make it less?
It is not worth so much! It were to die
Before my hour, to live in dread of death,
Tracing revolt: suspecting all about me,
Because they are near; and all who are remote,
Because they are far. But if it should be so—
If they should sweep me off from earth and empire,
Why, what is earth or empire of the earth?
I have loved, and lived, and multiplied my image;
To die is no less natural than those—
Acts of this clay! 'Tis true I have not shed
Blood, as I might have done, in oceans, till
My name became the synonyme of death—
A terror and a trophy. But for this
I feel no penitence; my life is love:
If I must shed blood, it shall be by force.
Till now, no drop from an Assyrian vein
Hath flow'd for me, nor hath the smallest coin
Of Nineveh's vast treasures e'er been lavish'd

On objects which could cost her sons a tear:
If then they hate me, 'tis because I hate not;
If they rebel, it is because I oppress not.
Oh, men! ye must be ruled with scythes not sceptres,
And mow'd down like the grass, else all we reap
Is rank abundance, and a rotten harvest
Of discontents infecting the fair soil,
Making a desert of fertility.—
I'll think no more.——Within there, ho!

Enter an ATTENDANT.

SARDANAPALUS.

Slave, tell
The Ionian Myrrha we would crave her presence.

ATTENDANT.

King, she is here.

MYRRHA *enters.*

SARDANAPALUS (*apart to Attendant*).

Away!
(*Addressing* MYRRHA.) Beautiful being!
Thou dost almost anticipate my heart;
It throbbed for thee, and here thou comest: let me
Deem that some unknown influence, some sweet oracle,
Communicates between us, though unseen,
In absence, and attracts us to each other.

MYRRHA.

There doth.

SARDANAPALUS.

I know there doth, but not its name;
What is it?

MYRRHA.

In my native land a God,
And in my heart a feeling like a God's,
Exalted; yet I own 'tis only mortal;
For what I feel is humble, and yet happy—
That is, it would be happy; but——

[MYRRHA *pauses.*

SARDANAPALUS.

There comes
For ever something between us and what
We deem our happiness: let me remove
The barrier which that hesitating accent
Proclaims to thine, and mine is sealed.

MYRRHA.

My lord!—

SARDANAPALUS.

My lord—my king—sire—sovereign! thus it is—
For ever thus, addressed with awe. I ne'er
Can see a smile, unless in some broad banquet's
Intoxicating glare, when the buffoons
Have gorged themselves up to equality,
Or I have quaffed me down to their abasement.
Myrrha, I can hear all these things, these names,
Lord—king—sire—monarch—nay, time was I prized them,
That is, I suffered them—from slaves and nobles;
But when they falter from the lips I love,

The lips which have been press'd to mine, a chill
Comes o'er my heart, a cold sense of the falsehood
Of this my station, which represses feeling
In those for whom I have felt most, and makes me
Wish that I could lay down the dull tiara,
And share a cottage on the Caucasus
With thee, and wear no crowns but those of flowers.

MYRRHA.

Would that we could!

SARDANAPALUS.

And dost *thou* feel this?—Why?

MYRRHA.

Then thou wouldst know what thou canst never know.

SARDANAPALUS.

And that is——

MYRRHA.

The true value of a heart;
At least, a woman's.

SARDANAPALUS.

I have proved a thousand—
A thousand, and a thousand.

MYRRHA.

Hearts?

SARDANAPALUS.

I think so.

MYRRHA.

Not one! the time may come thou may'st.

SARDANAPALUS.

It will.
Hear, Myrrha; Salemenes has declared—

Or why or how he hath divined it, Belus,
Who founded our great realm, knows more than I—
But Salemenes hath declared my throne
In peril.

MYRRHA.

He did well.

SARDANAPALUS.

And say'st *thou* so?
Thou whom he spurn'd so harshly, and now dared
Drive from our presence with his savage jeers,
And made thee weep and blush?

MYRRHA.

I should do both
More frequently, and he did well to call me
Back to my duty. But thou spakest of peril—
Peril to thee——

SARDANAPALUS.

Ay, from dark plots and snares
From Medes—and discontented troops and nations.
I know not what—a labyrinth of things—
A maze of mutter'd threats and mysteries:
Thou know'st the man—it is his usual custom.
But he is honest. Come, we 'll think no more on't—
But of the midnight festival.

MYRRHA.

'Tis time
To think of aught save festivals. Thou hast not
Spurn'd his sage cautions?

SARDANAPALUS.

What?—and dost thou fear?

MYRRHA.

Fear!—I'm a Greek, and how should I fear death?
A slave, and wherefore should I dread my freedom?

SARDANAPALUS.

Then wherefore dost thou turn so pale?

MYRRHA.

I love.

SARDANAPALUS.

And do not I? I love thee far—far more
Than either the brief life or the wide realm,
Which, it may be, are menaced;—yet I blench not.

MYRRHA.

That means thou lovest nor thyself nor me;
For he who loves another loves himself,
Even for that other's sake. This is too rash:
Kingdoms and lives are not to be so lost.

SARDANAPALUS.

Lost!—why, who is the aspiring chief who dared
Assume to win them?

MYRRHA.

Who is he should dread
To try so much? When he who is their ruler
Forgets himself, will they remember him?

SARDANAPALUS.

Myrrha!

MYRRHA.

Frown not upon me: you have smiled
Too often on me not to make those frowns
Bitterer to bear than any punishment
Which they may augur.—King, I am your subject!

Master, I am your slave! Man, I have loved you!—
Loved you, I know not by what fatal weakness,
Although a Greek, and born a foe to monarchs—
A slave, and hating fetters—an Ionian,
And, therefore, when I love a stranger, more
Degraded by that passion than by chains!
Still I have loved you. If that love were strong
Enough to overcome all former nature,
Shall it not claim the privilege to save you?'

SARDANAPALUS.

Save me, my beauty! Thou art very fair,
And what I seek of thee is love—not safety.

MYRRHA.

And without love where dwells security?

SARDANAPALUS.

I speak of woman's love.

MYRRHA.

The very first
Of human life must spring from woman's breast,
Your first small words are taught you from her lips,
Your first tears quench'd by her, and your last sighs
Too often breathed out in a woman's hearing,
When men have shrunk from the ignoble care
Of watching the last hour of him who led them.

SARDANAPALUS.

My eloquent Ionian! thou speak'st music,
The very chorus of the tragic song
I have heard thee talk of as the favourite pastime
Of thy far father-land. Nay, weep not—calm thee.

MYRRHA.

I weep not.—But I pray thee, do not speak
About my fathers or their land.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yet oft
Thou speakest of them.

MYRRHA.

True—true: constant thought
Will overflow in words unconsciously;
But when another speaks of Greece, it wounds me.

SARDANAPALUS.

Well, then, how wouldst thou *save* me, as thou saidst?

MYRRHA.

By teaching thee to save thyself, and not
Thyself alone, but these vast realms, from all
The rage of the worst war—the war of brethren.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why, child, I loathe all war, and warriors;
I live in peace and pleasure: what can man
Do more?

MYRRHA.

Alas! my lord, with common men
There needs too oft the show of war to keep
The substance of sweet peace; and for a king,
'Tis sometimes better to be fear'd than loved.

SARDANAPALUS.

And I have never sought but for the last.

MYRRHA.

And now art neither.

SARDANAPALUS.

Dost *thou* say so, Myrrha?

MYRRHA.

I speak of civic popular love, *self* love,
Which means that men are kept in awe and law,
Yet not oppress'd—at least they must not think so;
Or if they think so, deem it necessary,
To ward off worse oppression, their own passions.
A king of feasts, and flowers, and wine, and revel,
And love, and mirth, was never king of glory.

SARDANAPALUS.

Glory! what's that?

MYRRHA.

Ask of the gods thy fathers.

SARDANAPALUS.

They cannot answer; when the priests speak for them,
'Tis for some small addition to the temple.

MYRRHA.

Look to the annals of thine empire's founders.

SARDANAPALUS.

They are so blotted o'er with blood, I cannot.
But what wouldst have? the empire *has been* founded.
I cannot go on multiplying empires.

MYRRHA.

Preserve thine own.

SARDANAPALUS.

At least I will enjoy it.
Come, Myrrha, let us on to the Euphrates;
The hour invites, the galley is prepared,

And the pavilion, deck'd for our return,
In fit adornment for the evening banquet,
Shall blaze with beauty and with light, until
It seems unto the stars which are above us
Itself an opposite star; and we will sit
Crown'd with fresh flowers like——

MYRRHA.

Victims.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, like sovereigns,
The shepherd kings of patriarchal times,
Who knew no brighter gems than summer wreaths,
And none but tearless triumphs. Let us on.

Enter PANIA.

PANIA.

May the king live for ever!

SARDANAPALUS.

Not an hour
Longer than he can love. How my soul hates
This language, which makes life itself a lie,
Flattering dust with eternity. Well, Pania!
Be brief.

PANIA.

I am charged by Salemenes to
Reiterate his prayer unto the king,
That for this day, at least, he will not quit
The palace: when the general returns,

He will adduce such reasons as will warrant
His daring, and perhaps obtain the pardon
Of his presumption.

SARDANAPALUS.

What! am I then coop'd?
Already captive? can I not even breathe
The breath of heaven? Tell prince Salemenes,
Were all Assyria raging round the walls
In mutinous myriads, I would still go forth.

PANIA.

I must obey, and yet—

MYRRHA.

Oh, monarch, listen.—
How many a day and moon thou hast reclined
Within these palace walls in silken dalliance,
And never shown thee to thy people's longing;
Leaving thy subjects' eyes ungratified,
The satraps uncontroll'd, the gods unworshipp'd,
And all things in the anarchy of sloth,
'Till all, save evil, slumber'd through the realm!
And wilt thou not now tarry for a day,
A day which may redeem thee? Wilt thou not
Yield to the few still faithful a few hours,
For them, for thee, for thy past fathers' race,
And for thy sons' inheritance?

PANIA.

'Tis true!
From the deep urgency with which the prince
Despatch'd me to your sacred presence, I

Must dare to add my feeble voice to that
Which now has spoken.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, it must not be.

MYRRHA.

For the sake of thy realm!

SARDANAPALUS.

Away!

PANIA.

For that
Of all thy faithful subjects, who will rally
Round thee and thine.

SARDANAPALUS.

These are mere phantasies;
There is no peril:—'tis a sullen scheme
Of Salemenes, to approve his zeal,
And show himself more necessary to us.

MYRRHA.

By all that's good and glorious take this counsel.

SARDANAPALUS.

Business to-morrow.

MYRRHA.

Ay, or death to-night.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why let it come then unexpectedly,
'Midst joy and gentleness, and mirth and love;
So let me fall like the pluck'd rose!—far better
Thus than be wither'd.

MYRRHA.

Then thou wilt not yield,

Even for the sake of all that ever stirr'd
A monarch into action, to forego
A trifling revel.

SARDANAPALUS.

No.

MYRRHA.

Then yield for *mine*;
For my sake!

SARDANAPALUS.

Thine, my Myrrha?

MYRRHA.

'Tis the first
Boon which I e'er ask'd Assyria's king.

SARDANAPALUS.

That's true, and wer't my kingdom must be granted.
Well, for thy sake, I yield me. Pania, hence!
Thou hear'st me.

PANIA.

And obey. [*Exit* PANIA.

SARDANAPALUS.

I marvel at thee.
What is thy motive, Myrrha, thus to urge me?

MYRRHA.

Thy safety; and the certainty that nought
Could urge the prince thy kinsman to require
Thus much from thee, but some impending danger.

SARDANAPALUS.

And if I do not dread it, why shouldst thou?

MYRRHA.

Because *thou* dost not fear, I fear for *thee*.

SARDANAPALUS.

To-morrow thou wilt smile at these vain fancies.

MYRRHA.

If the worst come, I shall be where none weep,
And that is better than the power to smile.
And thou?

SARDANAPALUS.

I shall be king, as heretofore.

MYRRHA.

Where?

SARDANAPALUS.

With Baal, Nimrod, and Semiramis,
Sole in Assyria, or with them elsewhere.
Fate made me what I am—may make me nothing—
But either that or nothing must I be;
I will not live degraded.

MYRRHA.

Hadst thou felt
Thus always, none would ever dare degrade thee.

SARDANAPALUS.

And who will do so now?

MYRRHA.

Dost thou suspect none?

SARDANAPALUS.

Suspect!—that's a spy's office. Oh! we lose
Ten thousand precious moments in vain words,
And vainer fears. Within there!—Ye slaves, deck
The hall of Nimrod for the evening revel:
If I must make a prison of our palace,
At least we'll wear our fetters jocundly;
If the Euphrates be forbid us, and

The summer dwelling on its beauteous border,
Here we are still unmenaced. Ho! within there!

[*Exit* SARDANAPALUS.

MYRRHA (*solus*).

Why do I love this man? My country's daughters
Love none but heroes. But I have no country!
The slave hath lost all save her bonds. I love him;
And that's the heaviest link of the long chain—
To love whom we esteem not. Be it so:
The hour is coming when he'll need all love,
And find none. To fall from him now were baser
Than to have stabb'd him on his throne when highest
Would have been noble in my country's creed;
I was not made for either. Could I save him,
I should not love *him* better, but myself;
And I have need of the last, for I have fallen
In my own thoughts, by loving this soft stranger:
And yet methinks I love him more, perceiving
That he is hated of his own barbarians,
The natural foes of all the blood of Greece
Could I but wake a single thought like those
Which even the Phrygians felt when battling long
'Twixt Ilion and the sea, within his heart,
He would tread down the barbarous crowds, and triumph.
He loves me, and I love him; the slave loves
Her master, and would free him from his vices.
If not, I have a means of freedom still,
And if I cannot teach him how to reign,
May show him how alone a king can leave
His throne. I must not lose him from my sight.

[*Exit.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

The Portal of the same Hall of the Palace.

BELESES (*solus*).

The sun goes down: methinks he sets more slowly,
Taking his last look of Assyria's empire.
How red he glares amongst those deepening clouds,
Like the blood he predicts. If not in vain,
Thou sun that sinkest, and ye stars which rise,
I have outwatch'd ye, reading ray by ray
The edicts of your orbs, which make Time tremble
For what he brings the nations, 'tis the furthest
Hour of Assyria's years. And yet how calm!
An earthquake should announce so great a fall—
A summer's sun discloses it. Yon disk,
To the star-read Chaldean, bears upon
Its everlasting page the end of what
Seem'd everlasting; but oh! thou true sun!
The burning oracle of all that live,
As fountain of all life, and symbol of
Him who bestows it, wherefore dost thou limit
Thy lore unto calamity? Why not
Unfold the rise of days more worthy thine
All-glorious burst from ocean? why not dart
A beam of hope athwart the future's years,

As of wrath to its days? Hear me! oh! hear me!
I am thy wórshippęr, thy priest, thy servant—
I have gazed on thee at thy rise and fall,
And bow'd my head beneath thy mid-day beams,
When my eye dared not meet thee. I have watch'd
For thee, and after thee, and pray'd to thee,
And sacrificed to thee, and read, and fear'd thee,
And ask'd of thee, and thou hast answer'd—but
Only to thus much: while I speak, he sinks—
Is gone—and leaves his beauty, not his knowledge,
To the delighted west, which revels in
Its hues of dying glory. Yet what is
Death, so it be but glorious? 'Tis a sunset;
And mortals may be happy to resemble
The gods but in decay.

Enter ARBACES, *by an inner door.*

ARBACES.

Beleses, why
So rapt in thy devotions? Dost thou stand
Gazing to trace thy disappearing god
Into some realm of undiscover'd day?
Our business is with night—'tis come.

BELESES.

But not
Gone.

ARBACES.

Let it roll on—we are ready.

BELESES.

Yes.

Would it were over!

ARBACES.

Does the Prophet doubt,
To whom the very stars shine victory?

BELESES.

I do not doubt of victory—but the victor.

ARBACES.

Well, let thy science settle that. Meantime,
I have prepared as many glittering spears
As will out-sparkle our allies—your planets.
There is no more to thwart us. The she-king,
That less than woman, is even now upon
The waters with his female mates. The order
Is issued for the feast in the pavilion.
The first cup which he drains will be the last
Quaff'd by the line of Nimrod.

BELESES.

'Twas a brave one.

ARBACES.

And is a weak one—'tis worn out—we 'll mend it.

BELESES.

Art sure of that?

ARBACES.

Its founder was a hunter—
I am a soldier—what is there to fear?

BELESES.

The soldier.

ARBACES.

And the priest, it may be; but
If you thought thus, or think, why not retain
Your king of concubines? why stir me up?
Why spur me to this enterprise? your own
No less than mine?

BELESES.

Look to the sky!

ARBACES.

I look.

BELESES.

What seest thou?

ARBACES.

A fair summer's twilight, and
The gathering of the stars.

BELESES.

And midst them, mark
Yon earliest, and the brightest, which so quivers,
As it would quit its place in the blue ether.

ARBACES.

Well?

BELESES.

'Tis thy natal ruler—thy birth planet.

ARBACES (*touching his scabbard*).

My star is in this scabbard: when it shines,
It shall out-dazzle comets. Let us think
Of what is to be done to justify
Thy planets and their portents. When we conquer,
They shall have temples—ay, and priests—and thou

Shalt be the pontiff of—what gods thou wilt;
For I observe that they are ever just,
And own the bravest for the most devout.

BELESES.

Ay, and the most devout for brave—thou hast not
Seen me turn back from battle.

ARBACES.

No; I own thee
As firm in fight as Babylonia's captain,
As skilful in Chaldea's worship; now,
Will it but please thee to forget the priest,
And be the warrior?

BELESES.

Why not both?

ARBACES.

The better;
And yet it almost shames me, we shall have
So little to effect. This woman's warfare
Degrades the very conqueror. To have pluck'd
A bold and bloody despot from his throne,
And grappled with him, clashing steel with steel,
That were heroic or to win or fall;
But to upraise my sword against this silkworm,
And hear him whine, it may be——

BELESES.

Do not deem it:
He has that in him which may make you strife yet;
And were he all you think, his guards are hardy,
And headed by the cool, stern Salemenes.

ARBACES.

They 'll not resist.

BELESES.

Why not? they are soldiers.

ARBACES.

True,
And therefore need a soldier to command them.

BELESES.

That Salemenes is.

ARBACES.

But not their king.
Besides, he hates the effeminate thing that governs,
For the queen's sake, his sister. Mark you not
He keeps aloof from all the revels?

BELESES.

But
Not from the council—there he is ever constant.

ARBACES.

And ever thwarted; what would you have more
To make a rebel out of? A fool reigning,
His blood dishonour'd, and himself disdain'd;
Why, it is *his* revenge we work for.

BELESES.

Could
He but be brought to think so: this, I doubt of.

ARBACES.

What, if we sound him?

BELESES.

Yes—if the time served.

Enter BALEA.

BALEA.

Satraps! The king commands your presence at
The feast to-night.

BELESES.

To hear is to obey.
In the pavilion?

BALEA.

No; here in the palace.

ARBACES.

How! in the palace? it was not thus order'd.

BALEA.

It is so order'd now.

ARBACES.

And why?

BALEA.

I know not.
May I retire?

ARBACES.

Stay.

BELESES (*to* ARBACES *aside*).

Hush! let him go his way.
(*Alternately to* BALEA.) Yes, Balea, thank the monarch, kiss the hem
Of his imperial robe, and say, his slaves
Will take the crums he deigns to scatter from
His royal table at the hour—was 't midnight?

BALEA.

It was; the place, the Hall of Nimrod. Lords,
I humble me before you, and depart. [*Exit* BALEA.

ARBACES.

I like not this same sudden change of place,
There is some mystery; wherefore should he change it?

BELESES.

Doth he not change a thousand times a day?
Sloth is of all things the most fanciful—
And moves more parasangs in its intents
Than generals in their marches when they seek
To leave their foe at fault.—Why dost thou muse?

ARBACES.

He loved that gay pavilion,—it was ever
His summer dotage.

BELESES.

And he loved his queen—
And thrice a thousand harlotry besides—
And he has loved all things by turns, except
Wisdom and glory.

ARBACES.

Still—I like it not.
If he has changed—why so must we: the attack
Were easy in the isolated bower,
Beset with drowsy guards and drunken courtiers;
But in the Hall of Nimrod——

BELESES.

Is it so?
Methought the haughty soldier fear'd to mount
A throne too easily—does it disappoint thee

To find there is a slipperier step or two
Than what was counted on?

ARBACES.

When the hour comes,
Thou shalt perceive how far I fear or no.
Thou hast seen my life at stake—and gaily play'd for—
But here is more upon the dye—a kingdom.

BELESES.

I have foretold already—thou wilt win it:
Then on, and prosper.

ARBACES.

Now were I a soothsayer,
I would have boded so much to myself.
But be the stars obey'd—I cannot quarrel
With them, nor their interpreter. Who's here?

Enter SALEMENES.

SALEMENES.

Satraps!

BELESES.

My prince!

SALEMENES.

Well met—I sought ye both,
But elsewhere than the palace.

ARBACES.

Wherefore so?

SALEMENES.

'Tis not the hour.

ARBACES.

The hour—what hour?

SALEMENES.

Of midnight.

BELESES.

Midnight, my lord!

SALEMENES.

What, are you not invited?

BELESES.

Oh! yes—we had forgotten.

SALEMENES.

Is it usual
Thus to forget a sovereign's invitation?

ARBACES.

Why—we but now received it.

SALEMENES.

Then why here?

ARBACES.

On duty.

SALEMENES.

On what duty?

BELESES.

On the state's.
We have the privilege to approach the presence;
But found the monarch absent.

SALEMENES.

And I too
Am upon duty.

ARBACES.

May we crave its purport?

SALEMENES.

To arrest two traitors. Guards! Within there!

Enter Guards.

SALEMENES (*continuing*).

Satraps,
Your swords.

BELESES (*delivering his*).

My lord, behold my scimitar.

ARBACES (*drawing his sword*).

Take mine.

SALEMENES (*advancing*).

I will.

ARBACES.

But in your heart the blade—
The hilt quits not this hand.

SALEMENES (*drawing*).

How! dost thou brave me?
'Tis well—this saves a trial, and false mercy.
Soldiers, hew down the rebel!

ARBACES.

Soldiers! Ay—
Alone you dare not.

SALEMENES.

Alone! foolish slave—
What is there in thee that a prince should shrink from
Of open force? We dread thy treason, not
Thy strength: thy tooth is nought without its venom—
The serpent's, not the lion's. Cut him down.

BELESES (*interposing*).

Arbaces! are you mad? Have I not render'd
My sword? Then trust like me our sovereign's justice.

ARBACES.

No—I will sooner trust the stars thou prat'st of
And this slight arm, and die a king at least
Of my own breath and body—so far that
None else shall chain them.

SALEMENES (*to the Guards*).

You hear *him*, and *me*.
Take him not,—kill.

[*The Guards attack* ARBACES, *who defends himself valiantly and dexterously till they waver.*

SALEMENES.

Is it even so; and must
I do the hangman's office? Recreants! see
How you should fell a traitor.

[SALEMENES *attacks* ARBACES.

Enter SARDANAPALUS *and Train.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Hold your hands—
Upon your lives, I say. What, deaf or drunken?
My sword! Oh fool, I wear no sword: here, fellow,
Give me thy weapon. [*To a Guard.*

[SARDANAPALUS *snatches a sword from one of the soldiers, and makes between the combatants—they separate.*

SARDANAPALUS.

In my very palace!

What hinders me from cleaving you in twain,
Audacious brawlers?

BELESES.

Sire, your justice.

SALEMENES.

Or—

Your weakness.

SARDANAPALUS (*raising the sword*).

How?

SALEMENES.

Strike! So the blow's repeated
Upon yon traitor—whom you spare a moment,
I trust, for torture—I 'm content.

SARDANAPALUS.

What—him!
Who dares assail Arbaces?

SALEMENES.

I!

SARDANAPALUS.

Indeed!
Prince, you forget yourself. Upon what warrant?

SALEMENES (*showing the signet*).

Thine.

ARBACES (*confused*).

The king's!

SALEMENES.

Yes! and let the king confirm it.

SARDANAPALUS.

I parted not from this for such a purpose.

SALEMENES.

You parted with it for your safety—I
Employ'd it for the best. Pronounce in person.
Here I am but your slave—a moment past
I was your representative.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then sheathe
Your swords.

[ARBACES *and* SALEMENES *return their swords to the scabbards.*

SALEMENES.

Mine's sheathed: I pray you sheathe *not* yours;
'Tis the sole sceptre left you now with safety.

SARDANAPALUS.

A heavy one; the hilt, too, hurts my hand.
(*To a Guard.*) Here, fellow, take thy weapon back.
Well, sirs,
What doth this mean?

BELESES.

The prince must answer that.

SALEMENES.

Truth upon my part, treason upon theirs.

SARDANAPALUS.

Treason—Arbaces! treachery and Beleses!
That were an union I will not believe.

BELESES.

Where is the proof?

SALEMENES.

I'll answer that, if once
The king demands your fellow traitor's sword.

ARBACES (*to* SALEMENES).

A sword which hath been drawn as oft as thine
Against his foes.

SALEMENES.

And now against his brother,
And in an hour or so against himself.

SARDANAPALUS.

That is not possible: he dared not; no—
No—I'll not hear of such things. These vain bickerings
Are spawn'd in courts by base intrigues and baser
Hirelings, who live by lies on good men's lives.
You must have been deceived, my brother.

SALEMENES.

First
Let him deliver up his weapon, and
Proclaim himself your subject by that duty,
And I will answer all.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why, if I thought so—
But no, it cannot be; the Mede Arbaces—
The trusty, rough, true soldier—the best captain
Of all who discipline our nations——No,
I'll not insult him thus, to bid him render
The scimitar to me he never yielded
Unto our enemies. Chief, keep your weapon.

SALEMENES (*delivering back the signet*).

Monarch, take back your signet.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, retain it;
But use it with more moderation.

SALEMENES.

Sire,
I used it for your honour, and restore it
Because I cannot keep it with my own.
Bestow it on Arbaces.

SARDANAPALUS.

So I should:
He never asked it.

SALEMENES.

Doubt not, he will have it
Without that hollow semblance of respect.

BELESES.

I know not what hath prejudiced the prince
So strongly 'gainst two subjects, than whom none
Have been more zealous for Assyria's weal.

SALEMENES.

Peace, factious priest and faithless soldier! thou
Unit'st in thy own person the worst vices
Of the most dangerous orders of mankind.
Keep thy smooth words and juggling homilies
For those who know thee not. Thy fellow's sin
Is, at the least, a bold one, and not temper'd
By the tricks taught thee in Chaldea.

BELESES.

Hear him,
My liege—the son of Belus! he blasphemes
The worship of the land, which bows the knee
Before your fathers.

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh! for that I pray you

Let him have absolution. I dispense with
The worship of dead men; feeling that I
Am mortal, and believing that the race
From whence I sprung are—what I see them—ashes.

BELESES.

King! Do not deem so: they are with the stars,
And——

SARDANAPALUS.

You shall join them there ere they will rise,
If you preach farther.—Why, *this* is rank treason.

SALEMENES.

My lord!

SARDANAPALUS.

To school me in the worship of
Assyria's idols! Let him be released—
Give him his sword.

SALEMENES.

My lord, and king, and brother,
I pray ye pause.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, and be sermonized,
And dinn'd, and deafen'd with dead men and Baal,
And all Chaldea's starry mysteries.

BELESES.

Monarch! respect them.

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh! for that—I love them;
I love to watch them in the deep blue vault,
And to compare them with my Myrrha's eyes;
I love to see their rays redoubled in

The tremulous silver of Euphrates' wave,
As the light breeze of midnight crisps the broad
And rolling water, sighing through the sedges
Which fringe his banks: but whether they may be
Gods, as some say, or the abodes of gods,
As others hold, or simply lamps of night,
Worlds, or the lights of worlds, I know nor care not.
There's something sweet in my uncertainty
I would not change for your Chaldean lore;
Besides, I know of these all clay can know
Of aught above it, or below it—nothing.
I see their brilliancy and feel their beauty—
When they shine on my grave I shall know neither.

BELESES.

For *neither*, sire, say *better*.

SARDANAPALUS.

I will wait,
If it so please you, pontiff, for that knowledge.
In the mean time receive your sword, and know
That I prefer your service militant
Unto your ministry—not loving either.

SALEMENES (*aside*).

His lusts have made him mad. Then must I save him
Spite of himself.

SARDANAPALUS.

Please you to hear me, Satraps!
And chiefly thou, my priest, because I doubt thee
More than the soldier; and would doubt thee all
Wert thou not half a warrior: let us part
In peace—I 'll not say pardon—which must be

Earn'd by the guilty; this I'll not pronounce ye,
Although upon this breath of mine depends
Your own; and, deadlier for ye, on my fears.
But fear not—for that I am soft, not fearful—
And so live on. Were I the thing some think me,
Your heads would now be dripping the last drops
Of their attainted gore from the high gates
Of this our palace into the dry dust,
Their only portion of the coveted kingdom
They would be crown'd to reign o'er—let that pass.
As I have said, I will not *deem* ye guilty,
Nor *doom* ye guiltless. Albeit, better men
Than ye or I stand ready to arraign you;
And should I leave your fate to sterner judges,
And proofs of all kinds, I might sacrifice
Two men, who, whatsoe'er they now are, were
Once honest. Ye are free, sirs.

ARBACES.

Sire, this clemency——

BELESES (*interrupting him*).

Is worthy of yourself; and, although innocent,
We thank——

SARDANAPALUS.

Priest! keep your thanksgivings for Belus;
His offspring needs none.

BELESES.

But, being innocent——

SARDANAPALUS.

Be silent—Guilt is loud. If ye are loyal,
Ye are injured men, and should be sad, not grateful.

BELESES.

So we should be, were justice always done
By earthly power omnipotent; but innocence
Must oft receive her right as a mere favour.

SARDANAPALUS.

That's a good sentence for a homily,
Though not for this occasion. Prithee keep it
To plead thy sovereign's cause before his people.

BELESES.

I trust there is no cause.

SARDANAPALUS.

No *cause*, perhaps;
But many causers:—if ye meet with such
In the exercise of your inquisitive function
On earth, or should you read of it in heaven
In some mysterious twinkle of the stars,
Which are your chronicles, I pray you note,
That there are worse things betwixt earth and heaven
Than him who ruleth many and slays none;
And, hating not himself, yet loves his fellows
Enough to spare even those who would not spare him
Were they once masters—but that's doubtful. Satraps!
Your swords and persons are at liberty
To use them as ye will—but from this hour
I have no call for either. Salemenes!
Follow me.

[*Exeunt* SARDANAPALUS, SALEMENES, *and the Train, &c. leaving* ARBACES *and* BELESES.

ARBACES.

Beleses!

BELESES.

Now, what think you?

ARBACES.

That we are lost.

BELESES.

That we have won the kingdom.

ARBACES.

What? thus suspected—with the sword slung o'er us
But by a single hair, and that still wavering
To be blown down by his imperious breath,
Which spared us—why, I know not.

BELESES.

Seek not why;
But let us profit by the interval.
The hour is still our own—our power the same—
The night the same we destined. He hath changed
Nothing except our ignorance of all
Suspicion into such a certainty
As must make madness of delay.

ARBACES.

And yet——

BELESES.

What, doubting still?

ARBACES.

He spared our lives, nay, more,
Saved them from Salemenes.

BELESES.

And how long
Will he so spare? till the first drunken minute.

ARBACES.

Or sober, rather. Yet he did it nobly;
Gave royally what we had forfeited
Basely——

BELESES.

Say bravely.

ARBACES.

Somewhat of both, perhaps.
But it has touch'd me, and, whate'er betide,
I will no further on.

BELESES.

And lose the world!

ARBACES.

Lose any thing except my own esteem.

BELESES.

I blush that we should owe our lives to such
A king of distaffs!

ARBACES.

But no less we owe them;
And I should blush far more to take the grantor's!

BELESES.

Thou mayst endure whate'er thou wilt, the stars
Have written otherwise.

ARBACES.

Though they came down,
And marshall'd me the way in all their brightness,
I would not follow.

BELESES.

This is weakness—worse

Than a scared beldam's dreaming of the dead,
And waking in the dark.—Go to—go to.

ARBACES.

Methought he look'd like Nimrod as he spoke,
Even as the proud imperial statue stands
Looking the monarch of the kings around it,
And sways, while they but ornament, the temple.

BELESES.

I told you that you had too much despised him,
And that there was some royalty within him—
What then? he is the nobler foe.

ARBACES.

But we
The meaner:—Would he had not spared us!

BELESES.

So—
Wouldst thou be sacrificed thus readily?

ARBACES.

No—but it had been better to have died
Than live ungrateful.

BELESES.

Oh, the souls of some men!
Thou wouldst digest what some call treason, and
Fools treachery—and, behold, upon the sudden,
Because for something or for nothing, this
Rash reveller steps, ostentatiously,
'Twixt thee and Salemenes, thou art turn'd
Into—what shall I say?—Sardanapalus!
I know no name more ignominious.

ARBACES.

But
An hour ago, who dared to term me such
Had held his life but lightly—as it is,
I must forgive you, even as he forgave us—
Semiramis herself would not have done it.

BELESES.

No—the queen liked no sharers of the kingdom,
Not even a husband.

ARBACES.

I must serve him truly——

BELESES.

And humbly?

ARBACES.

No, sir, proudly—being honest.
I shall be nearer thrones than you to heaven;
And if not quite so haughty, yet more lofty.
You may do your own deeming—you have codes,
And mysteries, and corollaries of
Right and wrong, which I lack for my direction,
And must pursue but what a plain heart teaches.
And now you know me.

BELESES.

Have you finish'd?

ARBACES.

Yes—
With you.

BELESES.

And would, perhaps, betray as well
As quit me?

ARBACES.

That's a sacerdotal thought,
And not a soldier's.

BELESES.

Be it what you will—
Truce with these wranglings, and but hear me.

ARBACES.

No—
There is more peril in your subtle spirit
Than in a phalanx.

BELESES.

If it must be so—
I'll on alone.

ARBACES.

Alone!

BELESES.

Thrones hold but one.

ARBACES.

But this is fill'd.

BELESES.

With worse than vacancy—
A despised monarch. Look to it, Arbaces:
I have still aided, cherish'd, loved, and urged you;
Was willing even to serve you, in the hope
To serve and save Assyria. Heaven itself
Seem'd to consent, and all events were friendly,
Even to the last, till that your spirit shrunk
Into a shallow softness; but now, rather
Than see my country languish, I will be
Her saviour or the victim of her tyrant,

Or one or both, for sometimes both are one;
And, if I win, Arbaces is my servant.

ARBACES.

Your servant!

BELESES.

Why not? better than be slave,
The *pardon'd* slave of *she* Sardanapalus.

Enter PANIA.

PANIA.

My lords, I bear an order from the king.

ARBACES.

It is obey'd ere spoken.

BELESES.

Notwithstanding,
Let's hear it.

PANIA.

Forthwith, on this very night,
Repair to your respective satrapies
Of Babylon and Media.

BELESES.

With our troops?

PANIA.

My order is unto the satraps and
Their household train.

ARBACES.

But——

BELESES.

It must be obey'd;
Say, we depart.

PANIA.

My order is to see you
Depart, and not to bear your answer.

BELESES (*aside*).

Ay!
Well, sir, we will accompany you hence.

PANIA.

I will retire to marshal forth the guard
Of honour which befits your rank, and wait
Your leisure, so that it the hour exceeds not.

[*Exit* PANIA.

BELESES.

Now then obey!

ARBACES.

Doubtless.

BELESES.

Yes, to the gates
That grate the palace, which is now our prison,
No further.

ARBACES.

Thou hast harp'd the truth indeed!
The realm itself, in all its wide extension,
Yawns dungeons at each step for thee and me.

BELESES.

Graves!

ARBACES.

If I thought so, this good sword should dig
One more than mine.

BELESES.

It shall have work enough:

Let me hope better than thou augurest;
At present let us hence as best we may.
Thou dost agree with me in understanding
This order as a sentence.

ARBACES.

Why, what other
Interpretation should it bear? it is
The very policy of orient monarchs—
Pardon and poison—favours and a sword—
A distant voyage, and an eternal sleep.
How many satraps in his father's time—
For he I own is, or at least *was*, bloodless—

BELESES.

But *will* not, *can* not be so now.

ARBACES.

I doubt it.
How many satraps have I seen set out
In his sire's day for mighty vice-royalties,
Whose tombs are on their path; I know not how,
But they all sicken'd by the way, it was
So long and heavy.

BELESES.

Let us but regain
The free air of the city, and we 'll shorten
The journey.

ARBACES.

'Twill be shorten'd at the gates,
It may be.

BELESES.

No; they hardly will risk that.

They mean us to die privately, but not
Within the palace or the city walls,
Where we are known and may have partisans:
If they had meant to slay us here, we were
No longer with the living. Let us hence.

ARBACES.

If I but thought he did not mean my life——

BELESES.

Fool! hence—what else should despotism alarm'd
Mean? Let us but rejoin our troops, and march.

ARBACES.

Towards our provinces?

BELESES.

No; towards your kingdom.
There's time, there's heart, and hope, and power, and means,
Which their half measures leave us in full scope.—
Away!

ARBACES.

And I even yet repenting must
Relapse to guilt!

BELESES.

Self-defence is a virtue,
Sole bulwark of all right. Away, I say!
Let's leave this place, the air grows thick and choking,
And the walls have a scent of night-shade—hence!
Let us not leave them time for further council.
Our quick departure proves our civic zeal;
Our quick departure hinders our good escort,
The worthy Pania, from anticipating

The orders of some parasangs from hence;
Nay, there's no other choice but——hence, I say.
[*Exit with* ARBACES, *who follows reluctantly.*

Enter SARDANAPALUS *and* SALEMENES.

SARDANAPALUS.

Well, all is remedied and without bloodshed,
That worst of mockeries of a remedy;
We are now secure by these men's exile.

SALEMENES.

Yes,
As he who treads on flowers is from the adder
Twined round their roots.

SARDANAPALUS.

Why, what wouldst have me do?

SALEMENES.

Undo what you have done.

SARDANAPALUS.

Revoke my pardon?

SALEMENES.

Replace the crown now tottering on your temples.

SARDANAPALUS.

That were tyrannical.

SALEMENES.

But sure.

SARDANAPALUS.

We are so.
What danger can they work upon the frontier?

SALEMENES.

They are not there yet—never should they be so,
Were I well listen'd to.

SARDANAPALUS.

Nay, I *have* listen'd
Impartially to thee—why not to them?

SALEMENES.

You may know that hereafter; as it is,
I take my leave, to order forth the guard.

SARDANAPALUS.

And you will join us at the banquet?

SALEMENES.

Sire,
Dispense with me—I am no wassailer:
Command me in all service save the Bacchant's.

SARDANAPALUS.

Nay, but 'tis fit to revel now and then.

SALEMENES.

And fit that some should watch for those who revel
Too oft. Am I permitted to depart?

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes——Stay a moment, my good Salemenes,
My brother, my best subject, better prince
Than I am king. You should have been the monarch,
And I—I know not what, and care not; but
Think not I am insensible to all
Thine honest wisdom, and thy rough yet kind,
Though oft-reproving, sufferance of my follies.
If I have spared these men against thy counsel,

That is, their lives—it is not that I doubt
The advice was sound; but, let them live: we will not
Cavil about their lives—so let them mend them.
Their banishment will leave me still sound sleep,
Which their death had not left me.

SALEMENES.

Thus you run
The risk to sleep for ever, to save traitors—
A moment's pang now changed for years of crime.
Still let them be made quiet.

SARDANAPALUS.

Tempt me not:
My word is past.

SALEMENES.

But it may be recall'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis royal.

SALEMENES.

And should therefore be decisive.
This half indulgence of an exile serves
But to provoke—a pardon should be full
Or it is none.

SARDANAPALUS.

And who persuaded me
After I had repeal'd them, or at least
Only dismiss'd them from our presence, who
Urged me to send them to their satrapies?

SALEMENES.

True; that I had forgotten; that is, sire,

If they e'er reach their satrapies: why then
Reprove me more for my advice?

SARDANAPALUS.

And if
They do not reach them—look to it!—in safety,
In safety, mark me—and security—
Look to thine own.

SALEMENES.

Permit me to depart;
Their *safety* shall be cared for.

SARDANAPALUS.

Get thee hence, then;
And, prithee, think more gently of thy brother.

SALEMENES.

Sire, I shall ever duly serve my sovereign.

[*Exit* SALEMENES.

SARDANAPALUS (*solus*).

That man is of a temper too severe:
Hard but as lofty as the rock, and free
From all the taints of common earth—while I
Am softer clay, impregnated with flowers.
But as our mould is, must the produce be.
If I have err'd this time, 'tis on the side
Where error sits most lightly on that sense,
I know not what to call it; but it reckons
With me ofttimes for pain, and sometimes pleasure;
A spirit which seems placed about my heart
To court its throbs, not quicken them, and ask
Questions which mortal never dared to ask me,

Nor Baal, though an oracular deity—
Albeit his marble face majestical
Frowns as the shadows of the evening dim
His brows to changed expression, till at times
I think the statue looks in act to speak.
Away with these vain thoughts, I will be joyous—
And here comes Joy's true herald.

Enter MYRRHA.

MYRRHA.

King! the sky
Is overcast, and musters muttering thunder,
In clouds that seem approaching fast, and show
In forked flashes a commanding tempest.
Will you then quit the palace?

SARDANAPALUS.

Tempest, sayst thou?

MYRRHA.

Ay, my good lord.

SARDANAPALUS.

For my own part, I should be
Not ill content to vary the smooth scene,
And watch the warring elements; but this
Would little suit the silken garments and
Smooth faces of our festive friends. Say, Myrrha,
Art thou of those who dread the roar of clouds?

MYRRHA.

In my own country we respect their voices
As auguries of Jove.

SARDANAPALUS.

Jove—ay, your Baal—
Ours also has a property in thunder,
And ever and anon some falling bolt
Proves his divinity, and yet sometimes
Strike his own altars.

MYRRHA.

That were a dread omen.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes—for the priests. Well, we will not go forth
Beyond the palace walls to-night, but make
Our feast within.

MYRRHA.

Now, Jove be praised! that he
Hath heard the prayer thou wouldst not hear. The gods
Are kinder to thee than thou to thyself,
And flash this storm between thee and thy foes,
To shield thee from them.

SARDANAPALUS.

Child, if there be peril,
Methinks it is the same within these walls
As on the river's brink.

MYRRHA.

Not so; these walls
Are high and strong, and guarded. Treason has
To penetrate through many a winding way,
And massy portal; but in the pavilion
There is no bulwark.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, nor in the palace,

Nor in the fortress, nor upon the top
Of cloud-fenced Caucasus, where the eagle sits
Nested in pathless clefts, if treachery be:
Even as the arrow finds the airy king,
The steel will reach the earthly. But be calm:
The men, or innocent or guilty, are
Banish'd, and far upon their way.

MYRRHA.

They live, then?

SARDANAPALUS.

So sanguinary? *Thou!*

MYRRHA.

I would not shrink
From just infliction of due punishment
On those who seek your life: wer't otherwise,
I should not merit mine. Besides, you heard
The princely Salemenes.

SARDANAPALUS.

This is strange;
The gentle and the austere are both against me,
And urge me to revenge.

MYRRHA.

'Tis a Greek virtue.

SARDANAPALUS.

But not a kingly one—I'll none on't; or
If ever I indulge in't, it shall be
With kings—my equals.

MYRRHA.

These men sought to be so.

SARDANAPALUS.

Myrrha, this is too feminine, and springs
From fear——

MYRRHA.

For you.

SARDANAPALUS.

No matter—still 'tis fear.
I have observed your sex, once roused to wrath,
Are timidly vindictive to a pitch
Of perseverance, which I would not copy.
I thought you were exempt from this, as from
The childish helplessness of Asian women.

MYRRHA.

My lord, I am no boaster of my love,
Nor of my attributes; I have shared your splendour,
And will partake your fortunes. You may live
To find one slave more true than subject myriads;
But this the gods avert! I am content
To be beloved on trust for what I feel,
Rather than prove it to you in your griefs,
Which might not yield to any cares of mine.

SARDANAPALUS.

Griefs cannot come where perfect love exists,
Except to heighten it, and vanish from
That which it could not scare away. Let 's in—
The hour approaches, and we must prepare
To meet the invited guests, who grace our feast.

[*Exeunt*,

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Hall of the Palace illuminated—SARDANAPALUS *and his Guests at Table*—*A Storm without, and Thunder occasionally heard during the Banquet.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Fill full! Why this is as it should be: here
Is my true realm, amidst bright eyes and faces
Happy as fair! Here sorrow cannot reach.

ZAMES.

Nor elsewhere—where the king is, pleasure sparkles.

SARDANAPALUS.

Is not this better now than Nimrod's huntings,
Or my wild grandam's chase in search of kingdoms
She could not keep when conquer'd?

ALTADA.

Mighty though
They were, as all thy royal line have been,
Yet none of those who went before have reach'd
The acmé of Sardanapalus, who
Has placed his joy in peace—the sole true glory.

SARDANAPALUS.

And pleasure, good Altada, to which glory
Is but the path. What is it that we seek?
Enjoyment! We have cut the way short to it,

And not gone tracking it through human ashes,
Making a grave with every footstep.

ZAMES.

No;
All hearts are happy, and all voices bless
The king of peace, who holds a world in jubilee.

SARDANAPALUS.

Art sure of that? I have heard otherwise;
Some say that there be traitors.

ZAMES.

Traitors they
Who dare to say so!—'Tis impossible.
What cause?

SARDANAPALUS.

What cause? true,—fill the goblet up;
We will not think of them: there are none such,
Or if there be, they are gone.

ALTADA.

Guests, to my pledge!
Down on your knees, and drink a measure to
The safety of the king—the monarch, say I?
The god Sardanapalus!

[ZAMES *and the Guests kneel, and exclaim—*

Mightier than
His father Baal, the god Sardanapalus!

[*It thunders as they kneel; some start up in confusion.*

ZAMES.

Why do ye rise, my friends? In that strong peal
His father gods consented.

MYRRHA.

Menaced, rather.
King, wilt thou bear this mad impiety?

SARDANAPALUS.

Impiety!—nay, if the sires who reign'd
Before me can be gods, I'll not disgrace
Their lineage. But arise, my pious friends,
Hoard your devotion for the thunderer there:
I seek but to be loved, not worshipp'd.

ALTADA.

Both—
Both you must ever be by all true subjects.

SARDANAPALUS.

Methinks the thunders still increase: it is
An awful night.

MYRRHA.

Oh yes, for those who have
No palace to protect their worshippers.

SARDANAPALUS.

That's true, my Myrrha; and could I convert
My realm to one wide shelter for the wretched,
I'd do it.

MYRRHA.

Thou'rt no god, then, not to be
Able to work a will so good and general,
As thy wish would imply.

SARDANAPALUS.

And your gods, then,
Who can, and do not?

MYRRHA.

Do not speak of that,
Lest we provoke them.

SARDANAPALUS.

True, they love not censure
Better than mortals. Friends, a thought has struck me:
Were there no temples, would there, think ye, be
Air worshippers—that is, when it is angry,
And pelting as even now?

MYRRHA.

The Persian prays
Upon his mountain.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, when the sun shines.

MYRRHA.

And I would ask if this your palace were
Unroof'd and desolate, how many flatterers
Would lick the dust in which the king lay low?

ALTADA.

The fair Ionian is too sarcastic
Upon a nation whom she knows not well;
The Assyrians know no pleasure but their king's,
And homage is their pride.

SARDANAPALUS.

Nay, pardon, guests,
The fair Greek's readiness of speech.

ALTADA.

Pardon! sire:
We honour her of all things next to thee.
Hark! what was that?

ZAMES.

That! nothing but the jar
Of distant portals shaken by the wind.

ALTADA.

It sounded like the clash of—hark again!

ZAMES.

The big rain pattering on the roof.

SARDANAPALUS.

No more.
Myrrha, my love, hast thou thy shell in order?
Sing me a song of Sappho, her, thou know'st,
Who in thy country threw——

Enter PANIA, *with his Sword and Garments bloody, and disordered. The Guests rise in confusion.*

PANIA (*to the Guards*).

Look to the portals;
And with your best speed to the wall without.
Your arms! To arms! The king's in danger. Monarch!
Excuse this haste,—'tis faith.

SARDANAPALUS.

Speak on.

PANIA.

It is
As Salemenes fear'd; the faithless satraps——

SARDANAPALUS.

You are wounded—give some wine. Take breath, good Pania.

PANIA.

'Tis nothing—a mere flesh wound. I am worn
More with my speed to warn my sovereign,
Than hurt in his defence.

MYRRHA.

Well, sir, the rebels.

PANIA.

Soon as Arbaces and Beleses reach'd
Their stations in the city, they refused
To march; and on my attempt to use the power
Which I was delegated with, they call'd
Upon their troops, who rose in fierce defiance

MYRRHA.

All?

PANIA.

Too many.

SARDANAPALUS.

Spare not of thy free speech
To spare mine ears the truth.

PANIA.

My own slight guard
Were faithful—and what's left of it is still so.

MYRRHA.

And are these all the force still faithful?

PANIA.

No—
The Bactrians, now led on by Salemenes,
Who even then was on his way, still urged
By strong suspicion of the Median chiefs,

Are numerous, and make strong head against
The rebels, fighting inch by inch, and forming
An orb around the palace, where they mean
To centre all their force, and save the king.
(*He hesitates.*) I am charged to——

MYRRHA.

'Tis no time for hesitation.

PANIA.

Prince Salemenes doth implore the king
To arm himself, although but for a moment,
And show himself unto the soldiers: his
Sole presence in this instant might do more
Than hosts can do in his behalf.

SARDANAPALUS.

What, ho!
My armour there.

MYRRHA.

And wilt thou?

SARDANAPALUS.

Will I not?
Ho, there!—But seek not for the buckler; 'tis
Too heavy:—a light cuirass and my sword.
Where are the rebels?

PANIA.

Scarce a furlong's length
From the outward wall, the fiercest conflict rages.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then I may charge on horseback. Sfero, ho!
Order my horse out.—There is space enough

Even in our courts, and by the outer gate,
To martial half the horsemen of Arabia.

[*Exit* SFERO *for the armour.*

MYRRHA.

How I do love thee!

SARDANAPALUS.

I ne'er doubted it.

MYRRHA.

But now I know thee.

SARDANAPALUS (*to his Attendant*).

Bring down my spear, too.—
Where 's Salemenes?

PANIA.

Where a soldier should be,
In the thick of the fight.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then hasten to him——Is
The path still open, and communication
Left 'twixt the palace and the phalanx?

PANIA.

'Twas
When I late left him, and I have no fear:
Our troops were steady, and the phalanx form'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

Tell him to spare his person for the present,
And that I will not spare my own—and say,
I come.

PANIA.

There 's victory in the very word.

[*Exit* PANIA.

SARDANAPALUS.

Altada—Zames—forth, and arm ye! There
Is all in readiness in the armoury.
See that the women are bestow'd in safety
In the remote apartments: let a guard
Be set before them, with strict charge to quit
The post but with their lives—command it, Zames.
Altada, arm yourself, and return here;
Your post is near our person.

[*Exeunt* ZAMES, ALTADA, *and all save* MYRRHA.

Enter SFERO *and others with the King's Arms, &c.*

SFERO.

King! your armour.

SARDANAPALUS (*arming himself*).

Give me the cuirass—so: my baldric; now
My sword: I had forgot the helm, where is it?
That's well—no, 'tis too heavy: you mistake, too—
It was not this I meant, but that which bears
A diadem around it.

SFERO.

Sire, I deem'd
That too conspicuous from the precious stones
To risk your sacred brow beneath—and, trust me,
This is of better metal though less rich.

SARDANAPALUS.

You deem'd! Are you too turn'd a rebel? Fellow!
Your part is to obey: return, and—no—
It is too late—I will go forth without it.

SFERO.

At least wear this.

SARDANAPALUS.

Wear Caucasus! why, 'tis
A mountain on my temples.

SFERO.

Sire, the meanest
Soldier goes not forth thus exposed to battle.
All men will recognize you—for the storm
Has ceased, and the moon breaks forth in her brightness.

SARDANAPALUS.

I go forth to be recognized, and thus
Shall be so sooner. Now—my spear! I'm arm'd.

[*In going stops short, and turns to* SFERO.

Sfero—I had forgotten—bring the mirror*.

SFERO.

The mirror, sire?

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, sir, of polish'd brass,
Brought from the spoils of India—but be speedy.

[*Exit* SFERO.

SARDANAPALUS.

Myrrha, retire unto a place of safety.
Why went you not forth with the other damsels?

MYRRHA.

Because my place is here.

* "Such the *mirror* Otho held
In the Illyrian field."—See *Juvenal*.

SARDANAPALUS.

And when I am gone——

MYRRHA.

I follow.

SARDANAPALUS.

You! to battle?

MYRRHA.

If it were so,
'Twere not the first Greek girl had trod the path.
I will await here your *return.*

SARDANAPALUS.

The place
Is spacious, and the first to be sought out,
If they prevail; and, if it should be so,
And I return not——

MYRRHA.

Still, we meet again.

SARDANAPALUS.

How?

MYRRHA.

In the spot where all must meet at last—
In Hades! if there be, as I believe,
A shore beyond the Styx; and if there be not,
In ashes.

SARDANAPALUS.

Dar'st thou so much?

MYRRHA.

I dare all things
Except survive what I have loved, to be
A rebel's booty: forth, and do your bravest.

Re-enter SFERO *with the mirror.*

SARDANAPALUS (*looking at himself*).

This cuirass fits me well, the baldric better,
And the helm not at all. Methinks, I seem
[*Flings away the helmet after trying it again.*
Passing well in these toys; and now to prove them.
Altada! Where's Altada?

SFERO.

Waiting, sire,
Without: he has your shield in readiness.

SARDANAPALUS.

True; I forgot he is my shield-bearer
By right of blood, derived from age to age.
Myrrha, embrace me; yet once more—once more—
Love me, whate'er betide. My chiefest glory
Shall be to make me worthier of your love.

MYRRHA.

Go forth, and conquer!
[*Exit* SARDANAPALUS *and* SFERO.
Now, I am alone.
All are gone forth, and of that all how few
Perhaps return. Let him but vanquish, and
Me perish! If he vanquish not, I perish;
For I will not outlive him. He has wound
About my heart, I know not how nor why.
Not for that he is king; for now his kingdom
Rocks underneath his throne, and the earth yawns
To yield him no more of it than a grave;

And yet I love him more. Oh, mighty Jove!
Forgive this monstrous love for a barbarian,
Who knows not of Olympus: yes, I love him
Now, now, far more than——Hark—to the war shout!
Methinks it nears me. If it should be so,
[*She draws forth a small vial.*
This cunning Colchian poison, which my father
Learn'd to compound on Euxine shores, and taught me
How to preserve, shall free me! It had freed me
Long ere this hour, but that I loved, until
I half forgot I was a slave:—where all
Are slaves save one, and proud of servitude,
So they are served in turn by something lower
In the degree of bondage, we forget
That shackles worn like ornaments no less
Are chains. Again that shout! and now the clash
Of arms—and now—and now—

Enter ALTADA.

ALTADA.

Ho, Sfero, ho!

MYRRHA.

He is not here; what wouldst thou with him? How
Goes on the conflict?

ALTADA.

Dubiously and fiercely.

MYRRHA.

And the king?

ALTADA.

Like a king. I must find Sfero,
And bring him a new spear and his own helmet.
He fights till now bare-headed, and by far
Too much exposed. The soldiers knew his face,
And the foe too; and in the moon's broad light,
His silk tiara and his flowing hair
Make him a mark too royal. Every arrow
Is pointed at the fair hair and fair features,
And the broad fillet which crowns both.

MYRRHA.

Ye gods,
Who fulmine o'er my fathers' land, protect him!
Were you sent by the king?

ALTADA.

By Salemenes,
Who sent me privily upon this charge,
Without the knowledge of the careless sovereign.
The king! the king fights as he revels! ho!
What, Sfero! I will seek the armoury,
He must be there. [*Exit* ALTADA.

MYRRHA.

'Tis no dishonour—no—
'Tis no dishonour to have loved this man.
I almost wish now, what I never wish'd
Before, that he were Grecian. If Alcides
Were shamed in wearing Lydian Omphale's
She-garb, and wielding her vile distaff; surely
He, who springs up a Hercules at once,

Nurs'd in effeminate arts from youth to manhood,
And rushes from the banquet to the battle,
As though it were a bed of love, deserves
That a Greek girl should be his paramour,
And a Greek bard his minstrel, a Greek tomb
His monument. How goes the strife, sir?

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Lost,
Lost almost past recovery. Zames! Where
Is Zames?

MYRRHA.

Posted with the guard appointed
To watch before the apartment of the women.

[*Exit* OFFICER.

MYRRHA (*solus*).

He 's gone; and told no more than that all 's lost!
What need have I to know more? In those words,
Those little words, a kingdom and a king,
A line of thirteen ages, and the lives
Of thousands, and the fortune of all left
With life, are merged; and I, too, with the great,
Like a small bubble breaking with the wave
Which bore it, shall be nothing. At the least
My fate is in my keeping: no proud victor
Shall count me with his spoils.

Enter PANIA.

PANIA.

Away with me,
Myrrha, without delay; we must not lose
A moment—all that's left us now.

MYRRHA.

The king?

PANIA.

Sent me here to conduct you hence, beyond
The river, by a secret passage.

MYRRHA.

Then
He lives——

PANIA.

And charged me to secure your life,
And beg you to live on for his sake, till
He can rejoin you.

MYRRHA.

Will he then give way?

PANIA.

Not till the last. Still, still he does whate'er
Despair can do; and step by step disputes
The very palace.

MYRRHA.

They are here, then:—ay,
Their shouts come ringing through the ancient halls,
Never profaned by rebel echoes till

This fatal night. Farewell, Assyria's line!
Farewell to all of Nimrod! Even the name
Is now no more.

PANIA.

Away with me—away!

MYRRHA.

No; I'll die here!—Away, and tell your king
I loved him to the last.

Enter SARDANAPALUS *and* SALEMENES *with Soldiers.* PANIA *quits* MYRRHA, *and ranges himself with them.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Since it is thus,
We 'll die where we were born—in our own halls.
Serry your ranks—stand firm. I have despatch'd
A trusty satrap for the guard of Zames,
All fresh and faithful; they'll be here anon.
All is not over.—Pania, look to Myrrha.

[PANIA *returns towards* MYRRHA.

SALEMENES.

We have breathing time: yet one more charge, my friends—
One for Assyria!

SARDANAPALUS.

Rather say for Bactria!
My faithful Bactrians, I will henceforth be
King of your nation, and we 'll hold together
This realm as province.

SALEMENES.

Hark! they come—they come.

Enter BELESES *and* ARBACES *with the Rebels.*

ARBACES.

Set on, we have them in the toil. Charge! Charge!

BELESES.

On! on!—Heaven fights for us and with us.—On!

[*They charge the King and* SALEMENES *with their Troops, who defend themselves till the Arrival of* ZAMES, *with the Guard before mentioned. The Rebels are then driven off, and pursued by* SALEMENES, *&c. As the King is going to join the pursuit,* BELESES *crosses him.*

BELESES.

Ho! tyrant—*I* will end this war.

SARDANAPALUS.

Even so,
My warlike priest, and precious prophet, and
Grateful and trusty subject:—yield, I pray thee.
I would reserve thee for a fitter doom,
Rather than dip my hands in holy blood.

BELESES.

Thine hour is come.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, thine.—I've lately read,
Though but a young astrologer, the stars;
And ranging round the zodiac, found thy fate

In the sign of the Scorpion, which proclaims
That thou wilt now be crush'd.

BELESES.

But not by thee.

[*They fight;* BELESES *is wounded and disarmed.*

SARDANAPALUS (*raising his sword to despatch him, exclaims*—)

Now call upon thy planets, will they shoot
From the sky to preserve their seer and credit?

[*A party of Rebels enter and rescue* BELESES. *They assail the King, who, in turn, is rescued by a party of his Soldiers, who drive the Rebels off.*

The villain was a prophet after all.
Upon them—ho! there—victory is ours.

[*Exit in pursuit.*

MYRRHA (*to* PANIA).

Pursue! Why stand'st thou here, and leavest the ranks
Of fellow-soldiers conquering without thee?

PANIA.

The king's command was not to quit thee.

MYRRHA.

Me!

Think not of me—a single soldier's arm
Must not be wanting now. I ask no guard,
I need no guard: what, with a world at stake,
Keep watch upon a woman? Hence, I say,
Or thou art shamed! Nay, then, *I* will go forth,
A feeble female, 'midst their desperate strife,
And bid thee guard me *there*—where thou shouldst shield
Thy sovereign. [*Exit* MYRRHA.

PANIA.

Yet stay, damsel! She is gone.
If aught of ill betide her, better I
Had lost my life. Sardanapalus holds her
Far dearer than his kingdom, yet he fights
For that too; and can I do less than him,
Who never flesh'd a scimitar till now?
Myrrha, return, and I obey you, though
In disobedience to the monarch. [*Exit* PANIA.

Enter ALTADA *and* SFERO, *by an opposite door.*

ALTADA.

Myrrha!
What, gone? yet she was here when the fight raged,
And Pania also. Can aught have befallen them?

SFERO.

I saw both safe, when late the rebels fled:
They probably are but retired to make
Their way back to the harem.

ALTADA.

If the king
Prove victor, as it seems even now he must,
And miss his own Ionian, we are doom'd
To worse than captive rebels.

SFERO.

Let us trace them;
She cannot be fled far; and, found, she makes
A richer prize to our soft sovereign
Than his recover'd kingdom.

ALTADA.

Baal himself
Ne'er fought more fiercely to win empire, than
His silken son to save it: he defies
All augury of foes or friends; and like
The close and sultry summer's day, which bodes
A twilight tempest, bursts forth in such thunder
As sweeps the air and deluges the earth.
The man 's inscrutable.

SFERO.

Not more than others.
All are the sons of circumstance; away—,
Let 's seek the slave out, or prepare to be
Tortured for his infatuation, and
Condemn'd without a crime. [*Exeunt.*

Enter SALEMENES *and Soldiers, &c.*

SALEMENES.

The triumph is
Flattering: they are beaten backward from the palace,
And we have open'd regular access
To the troops station'd on the other side
Euphrates, who may still be true; nay, must be,
When they hear of our victory. But where
Is the chief victor? where 's the king?

Enter SARDANAPALUS, *cum suis, &c. and* MYRRHA.

SARDANAPALUS.

Here, brother.

SALEMENES.

Unhurt, I hope.

SARDANAPALUS.

Not quite; but let it pass.
We've clear'd the palace——

SALEMENES.

And I trust the city.
Our numbers gather; and I have order'd onward
A cloud of Parthians, hitherto reserved,
All fresh and fiery, to be pour'd upon them
In their retreat, which soon will be a flight.

SARDANAPALUS.

It is already, or at least they march'd
Faster than I could follow with my Bactrians,
Who spared no speed. I am spent; give me a seat.

SALEMENES.

There stands the throne, sire.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis no place to rest on,
For mind nor body: let me have a couch,
[*They place a seat.*
A peasant's stool, I care not what: so—now
I breathe more freely.

SALEMENES.

This great hour has proved
The brightest and most glorious of your life.

SARDANAPALUS.

And the most tiresome. Where 's my cup-bearer?
Bring me some water.

SALEMENES (*smiling*).

'Tis the first time he
Ever had such an order: even I,
Your most austere of counsellors, would now
Suggest a purpler beverage.

SARDANAPALUS.

Blood—doubtless.
But there 's enough of that shed; as for wine,
I have learn'd to-night the price of the pure element:
Thrice have I drank of it, and thrice renew'd,
With greater strength than the grape ever gave me,
My charge upon the rebels. Where 's the soldier
Who gave me water in his helmet?

ONE OF THE GUARDS.

Slain, sire!
An arrow pierced his brain, while, scattering
The last drops from his helm, he stood in act
To place it on his brows.

SARDANAPALUS.

Slain! unrewarded!
And slain to serve my thirst: that 's hard, poor slave!
Had he but lived, I would have gorged him with
Gold: all the gold of earth could ne'er repay
The pleasure of that draught; for I was parch'd
As I am now. [*They bring water—he drinks.*
I live again—from henceforth
The goblet I reserve for hours of love,
But war on water.

SALEMENES.

And that bandage, sire,
Which girds your arm?

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SARDAPANALUS.

A scratch from brave Beleses.

MYRRHA.

Oh! he is wounded!

SARDANAPALUS.

Not too much of that;
And yet it feels a little stiff and painful,
Now I am cooler.

MYRRHA.

You have bound it with——

SARDANAPALUS.

The fillet of my diadem: the first time
That ornament was ever aught to me
Save an incumbrance.

MYRRHA (*to the Attendants*).

Summon speedily
A leech of the most skilful: pray, retire;
I will unbind your wound and tend it.

SARDANAPALUS.

Do so,
For now it throbs sufficiently: but what
Know'st thou of wounds? yet wherefore do I ask.
Know'st thou, my brother, where I lighted on
This minion?

SALEMENES.

Herding with the other females,
Like frighten'd antelopes.

SARDANAPALUS.

No: like the dam
Of the young lion, femininely raging,
(And femininely meaneth furiously,

Because all passions in excess are female,)
Against the hunter flying with her cub,
She urged on with her voice and gesture, and
Her floating hair and flashing eyes, the soldiers
In the pursuit.

SALEMENES.

Indeed!

SARDANAPALUS.

You see, this night
Made warriors of more than me. I paused
To look upon her, and her kindled cheek;
Her large black eyes, that flash'd through her long hair
As it stream'd o'er her; her blue veins that rose
Along her most transparent brow; her nostril
Dilated from its symmetry; her lips
Apart; her voice that clove through all the din,
As a lute's pierceth through the cymbal's clash,
Jarr'd but not drown'd by the loud brattling; her
Waved arms, more dazzling with their own born whiteness
Than the steel her hand held, which she caught up
From a dead soldier's grasp; all these things made
Her seem unto the troops a prophetess
Of victory, or Victory herself,
Come down to hail us hers.

SALEMENES (*aside*).

This is too much
Again the love-fit 's on him, and all 's lost,
Unless we turn his thoughts.
(*Aloud.*) But pray thee, sire,
Think of your wound—you said even now 'twas painful.

SARDANAPALUS.

That 's true, too; but I must not think of it.

SALEMENES.

I have look'd to all things needful, and will now
Receive reports of progress made in such
Orders as I had given, and then return
To hear your further pleasure.

SARDANAPALUS.

Be it so.

SALEMENES (*in retiring*).

Myrrha!

MYRRHA.

Prince.

SALEMENES.

You have shown a soul to-night,
Which, were he not my sister's lord——But now
I have no time: thou lov'st the king?

MYRRHA.

I love
Sardanapalus.

SALEMENES.

But wouldst have him king still?

MYRRHA.

I would not have him less than what he should be.

SALEMENES.

Well, then, to have him king, and yours, and all
He should, or should not be; to have him *live*,
Let him not sink back into luxury.
You have more power upon his spirit than

Wisdom within these walls, or fierce rebellion
Raging without: look well that he relapse not.

MYRRHA.

There needed not the voice of Salemenes
To urge me on to this: I will not fail.
All that a woman's weakness can——

SALEMENES.

Is power
Omnipotent o'er such a heart as his;
Exert it wisely. [*Exit* SALEMENES.

SARDANAPALUS.

Myrrha! what, at whispers
With my stern brother? I shall soon be jealous.

MYRRHA (*smiling*).

You have cause, sire; for on the earth there breathes not
A man more worthy of a woman's love—
A soldier's trust—a subject's reverence—
A king's esteem—the whole world's admiration!

SARDANAPALUS.

Praise him, but not so warmly. I must not
Hear those sweet lips grow eloquent in aught
That throws me into shade; yet you speak truth.

MYRRHA.

And now retire, to have your wound look'd to.
Pray, lean on me.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, love! but not from pain.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

SARDANAPALUS *discovered sleeping upon a couch and occasionally disturbed in his slumbers, with* MYRRHA *watching.*

MYRRHA (*sola, gazing*).

I have stolen upon his rest, if rest it be,
Which thus convulses slumber: shall I wake him?
No, he seems calmer. Oh, thou God of Quiet!
Whose reign is o'er seal'd eyelids and soft dreams,
Or deep, deep sleep, so as to be unfathom'd,
Look like thy brother, Death—so still—so stirless—
For then we are happiest, as it may be, we
Are happiest of all within the realm
Of thy stern, silent, and unwakening twin.
Again he moves—again the play of pain
Shoots o'er his features, as the sudden gust
Crisps the reluctant lake that lay so calm
Beneath the mountain shadow; or the blast
Ruffles the autumn leaves, that drooping cling
Faintly and motionless to their loved boughs.
I must awake him—yet not yet: who knows
From what I rouse him? It seems pain; but if
I quicken him to heavier pain? The fever
Of this tumultuous night, the grief too of

His wound, though slight, may cause all this, and shake
Me more to see than him to suffer. No:
Let Nature use her own maternal means,—
And I await to second not disturb her.

SARDANAPALUS (*awakening*).

Not so—although ye multiplied the stars,
And gave them to me as a realm to share
From you and with you! I would not so purchase
The empire of eternity. Hence—hence—
Old hunter of the earliest brutes! and ye,
Who hunted fellow-creatures as if brutes;
Once bloody mortals—and now bloodier idols,
If your priests lie not! And thou, ghastly beldame!
Dripping with dusky gore, and trampling on
The carcasses of Inde—away! away!
Where am I? Where the spectres? Where——No—that
Is no false phantom: I should know it 'midst
All that the dead dare gloomily raise up
From their black gulf to daunt the living. Myrrha!

MYRRHA.

Alas! thou art pale, and on thy brow the drops
Gather like night dew. My beloved, hush—
Calm thee. Thy speech seems of another world,
And thou art loved of this. Be of good cheer;
All will go well.

SARDANAPALUS.

Thy *hand*—so—'tis thy hand;
'Tis flesh; grasp—clasp—yet closer, till I feel
Myself that which I was.

MYRRHA.

At least know me
For what I am, and ever must be—thine.

SARDANAPALUS.

I know it now. I know this life again.
Ah, Myrrha! I have been where we shall be.

MYRRHA.

My lord!

SARDANAPALUS.

I 've been i' the grave—where worms are lords,
And kings are——But I did not deem it so;
I thought 'twas nothing.

MYRRHA.

So it is; except
Unto the timid, who anticipate
That which may never be.

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh, Myrrha! if
Sleep shows such things, what may not death disclose?

MYRRHA.

I know no evil death can show, which life
Has not already shown to those who live
Embodied longest. If there be indeed
A shore, where mind survives, 'twill be as mind,
All unincorporate: or if there flits
A shadow of this cumbrous clog of clay,
Which stalks, methinks, between our souls and heaven,
And fetters us to earth—at least the phantom,
Whate'er it have to fear, will not fear death.

SARDANAPALUS.

I fear it not; but I have felt—have seen—
A legion of the dead.

MYRRHA.

And so have I.
The dust we tread upon was once alive,
And wretched. But proceed: what hast thou seen?
Speak it, 'twill lighten thy dimm'd mind.

SARDANAPALUS.

Methought——

MYRRHA.

Yet pause, thou art tired—in pain—exhausted; all
Which can impair both strength and spirit: seek
Rather to sleep again.

SARDANAPALUS.

Not now—I would not
Dream; though I know it now to be a dream
What I have dreamt:—and canst thou bear to hear it?

MYRRHA.

I can bear all things, dreams of life or death,
Which I participate with you, in semblance
Or full reality.

SARDANAPALUS.

And this look'd real,
I tell you: after that these eyes were open,
I saw them in their flight—for then they fled.

MYRRHA.

Say on.

SARDANAPALUS.

I saw, that is, I dream'd myself

Here—here—even where we are, guests as we were,
Myself a host that deem'd himself but guest,
Willing to equal all in social freedom;
But, on my right hand and my left, instead
Of thee and Zames, and our custom'd meeting,
Was ranged on my left hand a haughty, dark,
And deadly face—I could not recognize it,
Yet I had seen it, though I knew not where;
The features were a giant's, and the eye
Was still, yet lighted; his long locks curl'd down
On his vast bust, whence a huge quiver rose
With shaft-heads feather'd from the eagle's wing,
That peep'd up bristling through his serpent hair.
I invited him to fill the cup which stood
Between us, but he answer'd not—I fill'd it—
He took it not, but stared upon me, till
I trembled at the fix'd glare of his eye:
I frown'd upon him as a king should frown—
He frown'd not in his turn, but look'd upon me
With the same aspect, which appall'd me more,
Because it changed not; and I turn'd for refuge
To milder guests, and sought them on the right,
Where thou were wont to be. But—— [*He pauses.*

MYRRHA.

What instead?

SARDANAPALUS.

In thy own chair—thy own place in the banquet—
I sought thy sweet face in the circle—but
Instead—a grey-hair'd, wither'd, bloody-eyed,
And bloody-handed, ghastly, ghostly thing,

Female in garb, and crown'd upon the brow,
Furrow'd with years, yet sneering with the passion
Of vengeance, leering too with that of lust,
Sate:—my veins curdled.

MYRRHA.

Is this all?

SARDANAPALUS.

Upon
Her right hand—her lank, bird-like right hand—stood
A goblet, bubbling o'er with blood; and on
Her left, another, fill'd with—what I saw not,
But turn'd from it and her. But all along
The table sate a range of crowned wretches,
Of various aspects, but of one expression.

MYRRHA.

And felt you not this a mere vision?

SARDANAPALUS.

No:
It was so palpable, I could have touch'd them.
I turn'd from one face to another, in
The hope to find at last one which I knew
Ere I saw theirs: but no—all turn'd upon me,
And stared, but neither ate nor drank, but stared,
Till I grew stone, as they seem'd half to be,
Yet breathing stone, for I felt life in them,
And life in me: there was a horrid kind
Of sympathy between us, as if they
Had lost a part of death to come to me,
And I the half of life to sit by them.
We were in an existence all apart

From heaven or earth——And rather let me see
Death all than such a being!

MYRRHA.

And the end?

SARDANAPALUS.

At last I sate marble as they, when rose
The hunter, and the crew; and smiling on me—
Yes, the enlarged but noble aspect of
The hunter smiled upon me—I should say,
His lips, for his eyes moved not—and the woman's
Thin lips relax'd to something like a smile.
Both rose, and the crown'd figures on each hand
Rose also, as if aping their chief shades—
Mere mimics even in death—but I sate still:
A desperate courage crept through every limb,
And at the last I fear'd them not, but laugh'd
Full in their phantom faces. But then—then
The hunter laid his hand on mine: I took it,
And grasp'd it—but it melted from my own,
While he too vanish'd, and left nothing but
The memory of a hero, for he look'd so.

MYRRHA.

And was: the ancestors of heroes, too,
And thine no less.

SARDANAPALUS.

Ay, Myrrha, but the woman,
The female who remain'd, she flew upon me,
And burnt my lips up with her noisome kisses,
And, flinging down the goblets on each hand,
Methought their poisons flow'd around us, till

Each form'd a hideous river. Still she clung;
The other phantoms, like a row of statues,
Stood dull as in our temples, but she still
Embraced me, while I shrunk from her, as if,
In lieu of her remote descendant, I
Had been the son who slew her for her incest.
Then—then—a chaos of all loathsome things
Throng'd thick and shapeless: I was dead, yet feeling—
Buried; and raised again—consumed by worms,
Purged by the flames, and wither'd in the air!
I can fix nothing further of my thoughts,
Save that I long'd for thee, and sought for thee,
In all these agonies, and woke and found thee.

MYRRHA.

So shalt thou find me ever at thy side,
Here and hereafter, if the last may be.
But think not of these things—the mere creations
Of late events acting upon a frame
Unused to toil, yet over-wrought by toil
Such as might try the sternest.

SARDANAPALUS.

I am better.
Now that I see *thee once* more, *what was seen*
Seems nothing.

Enter SALEMENES.

SALEMENES.

Is the king so soon awake?

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes, brother, and I would I had not slept;
For all the predecessors of our line
Rose up, methought, to drag me down to them.
My father was amongst them, too; but he,
I know not why, kept from me, leaving me
Between the hunter-founder of our race,
And her, the homicide and husband-killer,
Whom you call glorious.

SALEMENES.

So I term you also,
Now you have shown a spirit like to hers.
By day-break I propose that we set forth,
And charge once more the rebel crew, who still
Keep gathering head, repulsed, but not quite quell'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

How wears the night?

SALEMENES.

There yet remain some hours
Of darkness: use them for your further rest.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, not to-night, if 'tis not gone: methought
I pass'd hours in that vision.

MYRRHA.

Scarcely one;
I watch'd by you: it was a heavy hour,
But an hour only.

SARDANAPALUS.

Let us then hold council;
To-morrow we set forth.

SALEMENES.

But ere that time,
I had a grace to seek.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis granted.

SALEMENES.

Hear it
Ere you reply too readily; and 'tis
For *your* ear only.

MYRRHA.

Prince, I take my leave.

[*Exit* MYRRHA.

SALEMENES.

That slave deserves her freedom.

SARDANAPALUS.

Freedom only!
That slave deserves to share a throne.

SALEMENES.

Your patience—
'Tis not yet vacant, and 'tis of its partner
I come to speak with you.

SARDANAPALUS.

How! of the queen?

SALEMENES.

Even so. I judged it fitting for their safety,
That, ere the dawn, she sets forth with her children
For Paphlagonia, where our kinsman Cotta
Governs; and there at all events secure
My nephews and your sons their lives, and with them
Their just pretensions to the crown in case——

SARDANAPALUS.

I perish—as is probable: well thought—
Let them set forth with a sure escort.

SALEMENES.

That
Is all provided, and the galley ready
To drop down the Euphrates; but ere they
Depart, will you not see——

SARDANAPALUS.

My sons? It may
Unman my heart, and the poor boys will weep;
And what can I reply to comfort them,
Save with some hollow hopes, and ill-worn smiles?
You know I cannot feign.

SALEMENES.

But you can feel;
At least, I trust so: in a word, the queen
Requests to see you ere you part—for ever.

SARDANAPALUS.

Unto what end? what purpose? I will grant
Aught—all that she can ask—but such a meeting.

SALEMENES.

You know, or ought to know, enough of women,
Since you have studied them so steadily,
That what they ask in aught that touches on
The heart, is dearer to their feelings or
Their fancy, than the whole external world.
I think as you do of my sister's wish;
But 'twas her wish—she is my sister—you
Her husband—will you grant it?

SARDANAPALUS.

'Twill be useless:
But let her come.

SALEMENES.

I go. [*Exit* SALEMENES.

SARDANAPALUS.

We have lived asunder
Too long to meet again—and *now* to meet!
Have I not cares enow, and pangs enow,
To bear alone, that we must mingle sorrows,
Who have ceased to mingle love?

Re-enter SALEMENES *and* ZARINA.

SALEMENES.

My sister! Courage:
Shame not our blood with trembling, but remember
From whence we sprung. The queen is present, sire.

ZARINA.

I pray thee, brother, leave me.

SALEMENES.

Since you ask it.
[*Exit* SALEMENES.

ZARINA.

Alone with him! How many a year has past,
Though we are still so young, since we have met,
Which I have worn in widowhood of heart.
He loved me not: yet he seems little changed—
Changed to me only—would the change were mutual!

He speaks not—scarce regards me—not a word—
Nor look—yet he *was* soft of voice and aspect,
Indifferent, not austere. My lord!

SARDANAPALUS.

Zarina!

ZARINA.

No, *not* Zarina—do not say Zarina.
That tone—that word—annihilate long years,
And things which make them longer.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis too late
To think of these past dreams. Let's not reproach—
That is, reproach me not—for the *last* time——

ZARINA.

And *first*. I ne'er reproach'd you.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis most true;
And that reproof comes heavier on my heart
Than——But our hearts are not in our own power.

ZARINA.

Nor hands; but I gave both.

SARDANAPALUS.

Your brother said,
It was your will to see me, ere you went
From Nineveh with—— (*He hesitates.*)

ZARINA.

Our children: it is true.
I wish'd to thank you that you have not divided
My heart from all that's left it now to love—

Those who are yours and mine, who look like you,
And look upon me as you look'd upon me
Once——But they have not changed.

SARDANAPALUS.

Nor ever will.
I fain would have them dutiful.

ZARINA.

I cherish
Those infants, not alone from the blind love
Of a fond mother, but as a fond woman.
They are now the only tie between us.

SARDANAPALUS.

Deem not
I have not done you justice: rather make them
Resemble your own line, than their own sire.
I trust them with you—to you: fit them for
A throne, or, if that be denied——You have heard
Of this night's tumults?

ZARINA.

I had half forgotten,
And could have welcomed any grief, save yours,
Which gave me to behold your face again.

SARDANAPALUS.

The throne—I say it not in fear—but 'tis
In peril; they perhaps may never mount it:
But let them not for this lose sight of it.
I will dare all things to bequeath it them;
But if I fail, then they must win it back
Bravely—and, won, wear it wisely, not as I
Have wasted down my royalty.

ZARINA.

They ne'er
Shall know from me of aught but what may honour
Their father's memory.

SARDANAPALUS.

Rather let them hear
The truth from you than from a trampling world.
If they be in adversity, they'll learn
Too soon the scorn of crowds for crownless princes,
And find that all their father's sins are theirs.
My boys!—I could have borne it were I childless.

ZARINA.

Oh! do not say so—do not poison all
My peace left, by unwishing that thou wert
A father. If thou conquerest, they shall reign,
And honour him who saved the realm for them,
So little cared for as his own; and if——

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis lost, all earth will cry out thank your father!
And they will swell the echo with a curse.

ZARINA.

That they shall never do; but rather honour
The name of him, who, dying like a king,
In his last hours did more for his own memory,
Than many monarchs in a length of days,
Which date the flight of time, but make no annals.

SARDANAPALUS.

Our annals draw perchance unto their close;
But at the least, whate'er the past, their end
Shall be like their beginning—memorable.

ZARINA.

Yet, be not rash—be careful of your life,
Live but for those who love.

SARDANAPALUS.

And who are they?
A slave, who loves from passion—I 'll not say
Ambition—she has seen thrones shake, and loves;
A few friends, who have revell'd till we are
As one, for they are nothing if I fall;
A brother I have injured—children whom
I have neglected, and a spouse——

ZARINA.

Who loves.

SARDANAPALUS.

And pardons?

ZARINA.

I have never thought of this,
And cannot pardon till I have condemn'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

My wife!

ZARINA.

Now blessings on thee for that word!
I never thought to hear it more—from thee.

SARDANAPALUS.

Oh! thou wilt hear it from my subjects. Yes—
These slaves, whom I have nurtured, pamper'd, fed,
And swoln with peace, and gorged with plenty, till
They reign themselves—all monarchs in their mansions—
Now swarm forth in rebellion, and demand
His death, who made their lives a jubilee;

While the few upon whom I have no claim
Are faithful! This is true, yet monstrous.

ZARINA.

'Tis
Perhaps too natural; for benefits
Turn poison in bad minds.

SARDANAPALUS.

And good ones make
Good out of evil. Happier than the bee,
Which hives not but from wholesome flowers.

ZARINA.

Then reap
The honey, nor inquire whence 'tis derived.
Be satisfied—you are not all abandon'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

My life insures me that. How long, bethink you,
Were not I yet a king, should I be mortal;
That is, where mortals *are*, not where they must be?

ZARINA.

I know not. But yet live for my—that is,
Your children's sake!

SARDANAPALUS.

My gentle, wrong'd Zarina!
I am the very slave of circumstance
And impulse—borne away with every breath!
Misplaced upon the throne—misplaced in life.
I know not what I could have been, but feel.
I am not what I should be—let it end.
But take this with thee: if I was not form'd
To prize a love like thine, a mind like thine,

Nor dote even on thy beauty—as I 've doted
On lesser charms, for no cause save that such
Devotion was a duty, and I hated
All that look'd like a chain for me or others
(This even rebellion must avouch); yet hear
These words, perhaps among my last—that none
Ere valued more thy virtues, though he knew not
To profit by them—as the miner lights
Upon a vein of virgin ore, discovering
That which avails him nothing: he hath found it,
But 'tis not his—but some superior's, who
Placed him to dig, but not divide the wealth
Which sparkles at his feet; nor dare he lift
Nor poise it, but must grovel on upturning
The sullen earth.

ZARINA.

Oh! if thou hast at length
Discover'd that my love is worth esteem,
I ask no more—but let us hence together,
And *I*—let may say *we*—shall yet be happy.
Assyria is not all the earth—we 'll find
A world out of our own—and be more blest
Than I have ever been, or thou, with all
An empire to indulge thee.

Enter SALEMENES.

SALEMENES.

I must part ye—
The moments, which must not be lost, are passing.

ZARINA.

Inhuman brother! wilt thou thus weigh out
Instants so high and blest?

SALEMENES.

Blest!

ZARINA.

He hath been
So gentle with me, that I cannot think
Of quitting.

SALEMENES.

So—this feminine farewell
Ends as such partings end, in *no* departure.
I thought as much, and yielded against all
My better bodings. But it must not be.

ZARINA.

Not be?

SALEMENES.

Remain, and perish——

ZARINA.

With my husband——

SALEMENES.

And children.

ZARINA.

Alas!

SALEMENES.

Hear me, sister, like
My sister:—all's prepared to make your safety
Certain, and of the boys too, our last hopes.
'Tis not a single question of mere feeling,
Though that were much—but 'tis a point of state:

The rebels would do more to seize upon
The offspring of their sovereign, and so crush——

ZARINA.

Ah! do not name it.

SALEMENES.

Well, then, mark me: when
They are safe beyond the Median's grasp, the rebels
Have miss'd their chief aim—the extinction of
The line of Nimrod. Though the present king
Fall, his sons live for victory and vengeance.

ZARINA.

But could not I remain, alone?

SALEMENES.

What! leave
Your children, with two parents and yet orphans—
In a strange land—so young, so distant?

ZARINA.

No—
My heart will break.

SALEMENES.

Now you know all—decide.

SARDANAPALUS.

Zarina, he hath spoken well, and we
Must yield awhile to this necessity.
Remaining here, you may lose all; departing,
You save the better part of what is left
To both of us, and to such loyal hearts
As yet beat in these kingdoms.

SALEMENES.

The time presses.

SARDANAPALUS.

Go, then. If e'er we meet again, perhaps
I may be worthier of you—and, if not,
Remember that my faults, though not atoned for,
Are *ended*. Yet, I dread thy nature will
Grieve more above the blighted name and ashes
Which once were mightiest in Assyria—than——
But I grow womanish again, and must not;
I must learn sternness now. My sins have all
Been of the softer order——*hide* thy tears—
I do not bid thee *not* to shed them—'twere
Easier to stop Euphrates at its source
Than one tear of a true and tender heart—
But let me not behold them; they unman me
Here when I had re-mann'd myself. My brother,
Lead her away.

ZARINA.

Oh, God! I never shall
Behold him more!

SALEMENES (*striving to conduct her*).

Nay, sister, I *must* be obey'd.

ZARINA.

I must remain—away! you shall not hold me.
What shall he die alone?—*I* live alone?

SALEMENES.

He shall *not die alone*; but lonely you
Have lived for years.

ZARINA.

That's false! I knew *he* lived,
And lived upon his image—let me go!

SALEMENES (*conducting her off the stage*).

Nay, then, I must use some fraternal force,
Which you will pardon.

ZARINA.

Never. Help me! Oh!
Sardanapalus, wilt thou thus behold me
Torn from thee?

SALEMENES.

Nay—then all is lost again,
If that this moment is not gain'd.

ZARINA.

My brain turns—
My eyes fail—where is he? [*She faints.*

SARDANAPALUS (*advancing*).

No—set her down—
She's dead—and you have slain her.

SALEMENES.

'Tis the mere
Faintness of o'er-wrought passion: in the air
She will recover. Pray, keep back.—[*Aside.*] I must
Avail myself of this sole moment to
Bear her to where her children are embark'd,
I' the royal galley on the river.

[SALEMENES *bears her off.*

SARDANAPALUS (*solus*).

This, too—
And this too must I suffer—I, who never
Inflicted purposely on human hearts
A voluntary pang! But that is false—

She loved me, and I loved her. Fatal passion!
Why dost thou not expire *at once* in hearts
Which thou hast lighted up at once? Zarina!
I must pay dearly for the desolation
Now brought upon thee. Had I never loved
But thee, I should have been an unopposed
Monarch of honouring nations. To what gulphs
A single deviation from the track
Of human duties leads even those who claim
The homage of mankind as their born due,
And find it, till they forfeit it themselves!

Enter MYRRHA.

SARDANAPALUS.

You here! Who call'd you?

MYRRHA.

No one—but I heard
Far off a voice of wail and lamentation,
And thought——

SARDANAPALUS.

It forms no portion of your duties
To enter here till sought for.

MYRRHA.

Though I might,
Perhaps, recal some softer words of yours
(Although they *too were chiding*), which reproved me,
Because I ever dreaded to intrude;
Resisting my own wish and your injunction

To heed no time nor presence, but approach you
Uncall'd for: I retire.

SARDANAPALUS.

Yet, stay—being here.
I pray you pardon me: events have sour'd me
Till I wax peevish—heed it not: I shall
Soon be myself again.

MYRRHA.

I wait with patience,
What I shall see with pleasure.

SARDANAPALUS.

Scarce a moment
Before your entrance in this hall, Zarina,
Queen of Assyria, departed hence.

MYRRHA.

Ah!

SARDANAPALUS.

Wherefore do you start?

MYRRHA.

Did I do so?

SARDANAPALUS.

'Twas well you enter'd by another portal,
Else you had met. That pang at least is spared her!

MYRRHA.

I know to feel for her.

SARDANAPALUS.

That is too much,
And beyond nature—'tis nor mutual,
Nor possible. You cannot pity her,
Nor she aught but——

MYRRHA.

Despise the favourite slave?
Not more than I have ever scorn'd myself.

SARDANAPALUS.

Scorn'd! what, to be the envy of your sex,
And lord it o'er the heart of the world's lord?

MYRRHA.

Were you the lord of twice ten thousand worlds—
As you are like to lose the one you sway'd—
I did abase myself as much in being
Your paramour, as though you were a peasant—
Nay, more, if that the peasant were a Greek.

SARDANAPALUS.

You talk it well——

MYRRHA.

And truly.

SARDANAPALUS.

In the hour
Of man's adversity all things grow daring
Against the falling; but as I am not
Quite fall'n, nor now disposed to bear reproaches,
Perhaps because I merit them too often,
Let us then part while peace is still between us.

MYRRHA.

Part!

SARDANAPALUS.

Have not all past human beings parted,
And must not all the present one day part?

MYRRHA.

Why?

SARDANAPALUS.

For your safety, which I will have look'd to,
With a strong escort to your native land;
And such gifts, as, if you have not been all
A queen, shall make your dowry worth a kingdom.

MYRRHA.

I pray you talk not thus.

SARDANAPALUS.

The queen is gone:
You need not shame to follow. I would fall
Alone—I seek no partners but in pleasure.

MYRRHA.

And I no pleasure but in parting not.
You shall not force me from you.

SARDANAPALUS.

Think well of it—
It soon may be too late.

MYRRHA.

So let it be;
For then you cannot separate me from you.

SARDANAPALUS.

And will not; but I thought you wish'd it.

MYRRHA.

I!

SARDANAPALUS.

You spoke of your abasement.

MYRRHA.

And I feel it
Deeply—more deeply than all things but love.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then fly from it.

MYRRHA.

'Twill not recal the past—
'Twill not restore my honour, nor my heart.
No—here I stand or fall. If that you conquer,
I live to joy in your great triumph; should
Your lot be different, I'll not weep, but share it.
You did not doubt me a few hours ago.

SARDANAPALUS.

Your courage never—nor your love till now;
And none could make me doubt it save yourself.
Those words——

MYRRHA.

Were words. I pray you, let the proofs
Be in the past acts you were pleased to praise
This very night, and in my further bearing,
Beside, wherever you are borne by fate.

SARDANAPALUS.

I am content; and, trusting in my cause,
Think we may yet be victors and return
To peace—the only victory I covet.
To me war is no glory—conquest no
Renown. To be forced thus to uphold my right
Sits heavier on my heart than all the wrongs
These men would bow me down with. Never, never
Can I forget this night, even should I live
To add it to the memory of others.
I thought to have made mine inoffensive rule

An era of sweet peace 'midst bloody annals,
A green spot amidst desert centuries,
On which the future would turn back and smile,
And cultivate, or sigh when it could not
Recal Sardanapalus' golden reign.
I thought to have made my realm a paradise,
And every moon an epoch of new pleasures.
I took the rabble's shouts for love—the breath
Of friends for truth—the lips of woman for
My only guerdon—so they are, my Myrrha:

[*He kisses her.*

Kiss me. Now let them take my realm and life!
They shall have both, but never thee!

MYRRHA.

No, never!
Man may despoil his brother man of all
That 's great or glittering—kingdoms fall—hosts yield—
Friends fail—slaves fly—and all betray—and, more
Than all, the most indebted—but a heart
That loves without self-love! 'Tis here—now prove it.

Enter SALEMENES.

SALEMENES.

I sought you.—How! *she* here again?

SARDANAPALUS.

Return not
Now to reproof: methinks your aspect speaks
Of higher matter than a woman's presence.

SALEMENES.

The only woman whom it much imports me
At such a moment now is safe in absence—
The queen's embark'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

And well? say that much.

SALEMENES.

Yes.

Her transient weakness has past o'er; at least,
It settled into tearless silence: her
Pale face and glittering eye, after a glance
Upon her sleeping children, were still fix'd
Upon the palace towers as the swift galley
Stole down the hurrying stream beneath the star-light;
But she said nothing.

SARDANAPALUS.

Would I felt no more
Than she has said.

SALEMENES.

'Tis now too late to feel!
Your feelings cannot cancel a sole pang;
To change them, my advices bring sure tidings
That the rebellious Medes and Chaldees, marshall'd
By their two leaders, are already up
In arms again; and, serrying their ranks,
Prepare to attack: they have apparently
Been join'd by other satraps.

SARDANAPALUS.

What! more rebels?
Let us be first, then.

SALEMENES.

That were hardly prudent
Now, though it was our first intention. If
By noon to-morrow we are join'd by those
I 've sent for by sure messengers, we shall be
In strength enough to venture an attack,
Ay, and pursuit too; but till then, my voice
Is to await the onset.

SARDANAPALUS.

I detest
That waiting; though it seems so safe to fight
Behind high walls, and hurl down foes into
Deep fosses, or behold them sprawl on spikes
Strew'd to receive them, still I like it not—
My soul seems lukewarm; but when I set on them,
Though they were piled on mountains, I would have
A pluck at them, or perish in hot blood!—
Let me then charge!

SALEMENES.

You talk like a young soldier.

SARDANAPALUS.

I am no soldier, but a man: speak not
Of soldiership, I loathe the word, and those
Who pride themselves upon it; but direct me
Where I may pour upon them.

SALEMENES.

You must spare
To expose your life too hastily; 'tis not
Like mine or any other subject's breath:

The whole war turns upon it—with it; this
Alone creates it, kindles, and may quench it—
Prolong it—end it.

SARDANAPALUS.

Then let us end both!
'Twere better thus, perhaps, than prolong either;
I'm sick of one, perchance of both.

[*A trumpet sounds without.*

SALEMENES.

Hark!

SARDANAPALUS.

Let us
Reply, not listen.

SALEMENES.

And your wound?

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis bound—
'Tis heal'd—I had forgotten it. Away!
A leech's lancet would have scratch'd me deeper;
The slave that gave it might be well ashamed
To have struck so weakly.

SALEMENES.

Now, may none this hour
Strike with a better aim!

SARDANAPALUS.

Ay, if we conquer;
But if not, they will only leave to me
A task they might have spared their king. Upon them!

[*Trumpet sounds again.*

SALEMENES.

I am with you.

SARDANAPALUS.

Ho, my arms! again, my arms!

[*Exeunt.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

The same Hall of the Palace.

MYRRHA *and* BALEA.

MYRRHA (*at a window*).

The day at last has broken. What a night
Hath usher'd it! How beautiful in heaven!
Though varied with a transitory storm,
More beautiful in that variety!
How hideous upon earth! where peace and hope,
And love and revel, in an hour were trampled
By human passions to a human chaos,
Not yet resolved to separate elements.—
'Tis warring still! And can the sun so rise,
So bright, so rolling back the clouds into
Vapours more lovely than the unclouded sky
With golden pinnacles, and snowy mountains,
And billows purpler than the ocean's, making
In heaven a glorious mockery of the earth,
So like we almost deem it permanent;
So fleeting, we can scarcely call it aught
Beyond a vision, 'tis so transiently
Scatter'd along the eternal vault: and yet
It dwells upon the soul, and soothes the soul,

And blends itself into the soul, until
Sunrise and sunset form the haunted epoch
Of sorrow and of love; which they who mark not,
Know not the realms where those twin genii
(Who chasten and who purify our hearts,
So that we would not change their sweet rebukes
For all the boisterous joys that ever shook
The air with clamour), build the palaces
Where their fond votaries repose and breathe
Briefly;—but in that brief cool calm inhale
Enough of heaven to enable them to bear
The rest of common, heavy, human hours,
And dream them through in placid sufferance;
Though seemingly employed like all the rest
Of toiling breathers in allotted tasks
Of pain or pleasure, *two* names for *one* feeling,
Which our internal, restless agony
Would vary in the sound, although the sense
Escapes our highest efforts to be happy.

BALEA.

You muse right calmly: and can you so watch
The sunrise which may be our last?

MYRRHA.

It is
Therefore that I so watch it, and reproach
Those eyes, which never may behold it more,
For having look'd upon it oft, too oft,
Without the reverence and the rapture due
To that which keeps all earth from being as fragile
As I am in this form. Come, look upon it,

The Chaldee's god, which, when I gaze upon,
I grow almost a convert to your Baal.

BALEA.

As now he reigns in heaven, so once on earth
He sway'd.

MYRRHA.

He sways it now far more, then; never
Had earthly monarch half the peace and glory
Which centres in a single ray of his.

BALEA.

Surely he is a god!

MYRRHA.

So we Greeks deem too;
And yet I sometimes think that gorgeous orb
Must rather be the abode of gods than one
Of the immortal sovereigns. Now he breaks
Through all the clouds, and fills my eyes with light
That shuts the world out. I can look no more

BALEA.

Hark! heard you not a sound?

MYRRHA.

No, 'twas mere fancy;
They battle it beyond the wall, and not
As in late midnight conflict in the very
Chambers: the palace has become a fortress
Since that insidious hour; and here within
The very centre, girded by vast courts
And regal halls of pyramid proportions,
Which must be carried one by one before
They penetrate to where they then arrived,

We are as much shut in even from the sound
Of peril as from glory.

BALEA.

But they reach'd
Thus far before.

MYRRHA.

Yes, by surprise, and were
Beat back by valour; now at once we have
Courage and vigilance to guard us.

BALEA.

May they
Prosper!

MYRRHA.

That is the prayer of many, and
The dread of more: it is an anxious hour;
I strive to keep it from my thoughts. Alas!
How vainly!

BALEA.

It is said the king's demeanour
In the late action scarcely more appall'd
The rebels than astonish'd his true subjects.

MYRRHA.

'Tis easy to astonish or appal
The vulgar mass which moulds a horde of slaves;
But he did bravely.

BALEA.

Slew he not Beleses?
I heard the soldiers say he struck him down.

MYRRHA.

The wretch was overthrown, but rescued to

Triumph, perhaps, o'er one who vanquish'd him
In fight, as he had spared him in his peril;
And by that heedless pity risk'd a crown.

BALEA.

Hark!

MYRRHA.

You are right; some steps approach, but slowly.

Enter Soldiers, bearing in SALEMENES *wounded, with a broken Javelin in his Side; they seat him upon one of the Couches which furnish the Apartment.*

MYRRHA.

Oh, Jove!

BALEA.

Then all is over.

SALEMENES.

That is false.
Hew down the slave who says so, if a soldier.

MYRRHA.

Spare him—he 's none: a mere court butterfly,
That flutters in the pageant of a monarch.

SALEMENES.

Let him live on, then.

MYRRHA.

So wilt thou, I trust.

SALEMENES.

I fain would live this hour out, and the event,
But doubt it. Wherefore did ye bear me here?

SOLDIER.

By the king's order. When the javelin struck you,
You fell and fainted; 'twas his strict command
To bear you to this hall.

SALEMENES.

'Twas not ill done:
For seeming slain in that cold dizzy trance,
The sight might shake our soldiers—but—'tis vain,
I feel it ebbing!

MYRRHA.

Let me see the wound;
I am not quite skilless: in my native land
'Tis part of our instruction. War being constant,
We are nerved to look on such things.

SOLDIER.

Best extract
The javelin.

MYRRHA.

Hold! no, no, it cannot be.

SALEMENES.

I am sped, then!

MYRRHA.

With the blood that fast must follow
The extracted weapon, I do fear thy life.

SALEMENES.

And I *not* death. Where was the king when you
Convey'd me from the spot where I was stricken?

SOLDIER.

Upon the same ground, and encouraging

With voice and gesture the dispirited troops
Who had seen you fall, and falter'd back.

SALEMENES.

Whom heard ye
Named next to the command?

SOLDIER.

I did not hear.

SALEMENES.

Fly, then, and tell him, 'twas my last request
That Zames take my post until the junction,
So hoped for, yet delay'd, of Ofratanes,
Satrap of Susa. Leave me here: our troops
Are not so numerous as to spare your absence.

SOLDIER.

But, prince——

SALEMENES.

Hence, I say! Here's a courtier and
A woman, the best chamber company.
As you would not permit me to expire
Upon the field, I'll have no idle soldiers
About my sick couch. Hence! and do my bidding!

[*Exeunt the Soldiers.*

MYRRHA.

Gallant and glorious spirit! must the earth
So soon resign thee?

SALEMENES.

Gentle Myrrha, 'tis
The end I would have chosen, had I saved
The monarch or the monarchy by this;
As 'tis, I have not outlived them.

MYRRHA.

You wax paler.

SALEMENES.

Your hand; this broken weapon but prolongs
My pangs, without sustaining life enough
To make me useful: I would draw it forth
And my life with it, could I but hear how
The fight goes.

Enter SARDANAPALUS *and Soldiers.*

SARDANAPALUS.

My best brother!

SALEMENES.

And the battle
Is lost?

SARDANAPALUS (*despondingly*).

You see *me here.*

SALEMENES.

I'd rather see you *thus!*

[*He draws out the weapon from the wound, and dies.*

SARDANAPALUS.

And *thus* I will be seen; unless the succour,
The last frail reed of our beleaguer'd hopes,
Arrive with Ofratanes.

MYRRHA.

Did you not
Receive a token from your dying brother,
Appointing Zames chief?

SARDANAPALUS.

I did.

MYRRHA.

Where's Zames?

SARDANAPALUS.

Dead.

MYRRHA.

And Altada?

SARDANAPALUS.

Dying.

MYRRHA.

Pania? Sfero?

SARDANAPALUS.

Pania yet lives; but Sfero's fled, or captive.
I am alone.

MYRRHA.

And is all lost?

SARDANAPALUS.

Our walls,
Though thinly mann'd, may still hold out against
Their present force, or aught save treachery:
But i' the field——

MYRRHA.

I thought 'twas the intent
Of Salemenes not to risk a sally
Till ye were strengthen'd by the expected succours.

SARDANAPALUS.

I overruled him.

MYRRHA.

Well, the fault's a brave one.

SARDANAPALUS.

But fatal. Oh, my brother! I would give
These realms, of which thou wert the ornament,
The sword and shield, the sole-redeeming honour,
To call back——But I will not weep for thee;
Thou shalt be mourn'd for as thou wouldst be mourn'd.
It grieves me most that thou couldst quit this life
Believing that I could survive what thou
Hast died for—our long royalty of race.
If I redeem it, I will give thee blood
Of thousands, tears of millions, for atonement,
(The tears of all the good are thine already).
If not, we meet again soon, if the spirit
Within us lives beyond:—thou readest mine,
And dost me justice now. Let me once clasp
That yet warm hand, and fold that throbless heart
[*Embraces the body.*
To this which beats so bitterly. Now, bear
The body hence.

SOLDIER.

Where?

SARDANAPALUS.

To my proper chamber.
Place it beneath my canopy, as though
The king lay there: when this is done, we will
Speak further of the rites due to such ashes.

[*Exeunt Soldiers with the body of* SALEMENES.

Enter PANIA.

SARDANAPALUS.

Well, Pania! have you placed the guards, and issued
The orders fix'd on?

PANIA.

Sire, I have obey'd.

SARDANAPALUS.

And do the soldiers keep their hearts up?

PANIA.

Sire?

SARDANAPALUS.

I 'm answer'd! When a king asks twice, and has
A question as an answer to *his* question,
It is a portent. What! they are dishearten'd?

PANIA.

The death of Salemenes, and the shouts
Of the exulting rebels on his fall,
Have made them——

SARDANAPALUS.

Rage—not droop—it should have been.
We 'll find the means to rouse them.

PANIA.

Such a loss
Might sadden even a victory.

SARDANAPALUS.

Alas!
Who can so feel it as I feel? but yet

Though coop'd within these walls, they are strong, and we
Have those without will break their way through hosts,
To make their sovereign's dwelling what it was—
A palace; not a prison, nor a fortress.

Enter an Officer, hastily.

SARDANAPALUS.

Thy face seems ominous. Speak!

OFFICER.

I dare not.

SARDANAPALUS.

Dare not?
While millions dare revolt with sword in hand!
That's strange. I pray thee break that loyal silence
Which loathes to shock its sovereign; we can hear
Worse than thou hast to tell.

PANIA.

Proceed, thou hearest.

OFFICER.

The wall which skirted near the river's brink
Is thrown down by the sudden inundation
Of the Euphrates, which now rolling, swoln
From the enormous mountains where it rises,
By the late rains of that tempestuous region,
O'erfloods its banks, and hath destroy'd the bulwark.

PANIA.

That's a black augury! it has been said

For ages, " That the city ne'er should yield
" To man, until the river grew its foe."

SARDANAPALUS.

I can forgive the omen, not the ravage.
How much is swept down of the wall?

OFFICER.

About
Some twenty stadii.

SARDANAPALUS.

And all this is left
Pervious to the assailants?

OFFICER.

For the present
The river's fury must impede the assault;
But when he shrinks into his wonted channel,
And may be cross'd by the accustom'd barks,
The palace is their own.

SARDANAPALUS.

That shall be never.
Though men, and gods, and elements, and omens,
Have risen up 'gainst one who ne'er provoked them,
My fathers' house shall never be a cave
For wolves to horde and howl in.

PANIA.

With your sanction
I will proceed to the spot, and take such measures
For the assurance of the vacant space
As time and means permit.

SARDANAPALUS.

About it straight,

And bring me back as speedily as full
And fair investigation may permit
Report of the true state of this irruption
Of waters. [*Exeunt* PANIA *and the Officer.*

MYRRHA.

Thus the very waves rise up
Against you.

SARDANAPALUS.

They are not my subjects, girl,
And may be pardon'd, since they can't be punish'd.

MYRRHA.

I joy to see this portent shakes you not.

SARDANAPALUS.

I am past the fear of portents: they can tell me
Nothing I have not told myself since midnight:
Despair anticipates such things.

MYRRHA.

Despair!

SARDANAPALUS.

No; not despair precisely. When we know
All that can come, and how to meet it, our
Resolves, if firm, may merit a more noble
Word than this is to give it utterance.
But what are words to us? we have well nigh done
With them and all things.

MYRRHA.

Save *one deed*—the last
And greatest to all mortals; crowning act
Of all that was—or is—or is to be—
The only thing common to all mankind,

So different in their births, tongues, sexes, natures,
Hues, features, climes, times, feelings, intellects,
Without one point of union save in this,
To which we tend, for which we 're born, and thread
The labyrinth of mystery, call'd life.

SARDANAPALUS.

Our clew being well nigh wound out, let 's be cheerful.
They who have nothing more to fear may well
Indulge a smile at that which once appall'd;
As children at discover'd bugbears.

Re-enter PANIA.

PANIA.

'Tis
As was reported: I have order'd there
A double guard, withdrawing from the wall
Where it was strongest the required addition
To watch the breach occasion'd by the waters.

SARDANAPALUS.

You have done your duty faithfully, and as
My worthy Pania! further ties between us
Draw near a close. I pray you take this key:
[*Gives a key.*
It opens to a secret chamber, placed
Behind the couch in my own chamber. (Now
Press'd by a nobler weight than e'er it bore—
Though a long line of sovereigns have lain down
Along its golden frame—as bearing for
A time what late was Salemenes.) Search

The secret covert to which this will lead you;
'Tis full of treasure; take it for yourself
And your companions: there's enough to load ye,
Though ye be many. Let the slaves be freed, too;
And all the inmates of the palace, of
Whatever sex, now quit it in an hour.
Thence launch the regal barks, once form'd for pleasure,
And now to serve for safety, and embark.
The river's broad and swoln, and uncommanded
(More potent than a king) by these besiegers.
Fly! and be happy!

PANIA.

Under your protection!
So you accompany your faithful guard.

SARDANAPALUS.

No, Pania! that must not be; get thee hence,
And leave me to my fate.

PANIA.

'Tis the first time
I ever disobey'd: but now——

SARDANAPALUS.

So all men
Dare beard me now, and Insolence within
Apes Treason from without. Question no further;
'Tis my command, my last command. Wilt *thou*
Oppose it? *thou!*

PANIA.

But yet—not yet.

SARDANAPALUS.

Well, then,

Swear that you will obey when I shall give
The signal.

PANIA.

With a heavy but true heart,
I promise.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis enough. Now order here
Faggots, pine-nuts, and wither'd leaves, and such
Things as catch fire and blaze with one sole spark;
Bring cedar, too, and precious drugs, and spices,
And mighty planks, to nourish a tall pile;
Bring frankincense and myrrh, too, for it is
For a great sacrifice I build the pyre;
And heap them round yon throne.

PANIA.

My lord!

SARDANAPALUS.

I have said it,
And *you* have *sworn*.

PANIA.

And could keep my faith
Without a vow. [*Exit* PANIA.

MYRRHA.

What mean you?

SARDANAPALUS.

You shall know
Anon—what the whole earth shall ne'er forget.

PANIA, *returning with a Herald.*

PANIA.

My king, in going forth upon my duty,
This herald has been brought before me, craving
An audience.

SARDANAPALUS.

Let him speak.

HERALD.

The *King* Arbaces——

SARDANAPALUS.

What, crown'd already?—But, proceed.

HERALD.

Beleses,

The anointed high-priest——

SARDANAPALUS.

Of what god, or demon?
With new kings rise new altars. But, proceed;
You are sent to prate your master's will, and not
Reply to mine.

HERALD.

And Satrap Ofratanés——

SARDANAPALUS.

Why, *he* is *ours*.

HERALD (*showing a ring*).

Be sure that he is now
In the camp of the conquerors; behold
His signet ring.

SARDANAPALUS.

'Tis his. A worthy triad!

Poor Salemenes! thou hast died in time
To see one treachery the less: this man
Was thy true friend and my most trusted subject.
Proceed.

HERALD.

They offer thee thy life, and freedom
Of choice to single out a residence
In any of the further provinces,
Guarded and watch'd, but not confined in person,
Where thou shalt pass thy days in peace; but on
Condition that the three young princes are
Given up as hostages.

SARDANAPALUS (*ironically*).

The generous victors!

HERALD.

I wait the answer.

SARDANAPALUS.

Answer, slave! How long
Have slaves decided on the doom of kings?

HERALD.

Since they were free.

SARDANAPALUS.

Mouthpiece of mutiny!
Thou at the least shalt learn the penalty
Of treason, though its proxy only. Pania!
Let his head be thrown from our walls within
The rebels' lines, his carcass down the river.
Away with him!

[PANIA *and the Guards seizing him.*

PANIA.

I never yet obey'd
Your orders with more pleasure than the present.
Hence with him, soldiers! do not soil this hall
Of royalty with treasonable gore;
Put him to rest without.

HERALD.

A single word:
My office, king, is sacred.

SARDANAPALUS.

And what's *mine?*
That thou shouldst come and dare to ask of me
To lay it down?

HERALD.

I but obey'd my orders,
At the same peril if refused, as now
Incurr'd by my obedience.

SARDANAPALUS.

So there are
New monarchs of an hour's growth as despotic
As sovereigns swathed in purple, and enthroned
From birth to manhood!

HERALD.

My life waits your breath.
Yours (I speak humbly)—but it may be—yours
May also be in danger scarce less imminent:
Would it then suit the last hours of a line
Such as is that of Nimrod, to destroy
A peaceful herald, unarm'd, in his office;

And violate not only all that man
Holds sacred between man and man—but that
More holy tie which links us with the gods?

SARDANAPALUS.

He's right.—Let him go free.—My life's last act
Shall not be one of wrath. Here, fellow, take
[*Gives him a golden cup from a table near.*
This golden goblet, let it hold your wine,
And think of *me*; or melt it into ingots,
And think of nothing but their weight and value.

HERALD.

I thank you doubly for my life, and this
Most gorgeous gift, which renders it more precious.
But must I bear no answer?

SARDANAPALUS.

Yes,—I ask
An hour's truce to consider.

HERALD.

But an hour's?

SARDANAPALUS.

An hour's: if at the expiration of
That time your masters hear no further from me,
They are to deem that I reject their terms,
And act befittingly.

HERALD.

I shall not fail
To be a faithful legate of your pleasure.

SARDANAPALUS.

And, hark! a word more.

HERALD.

I shall not forget it,
Whate'er it be.

SARDANAPALUS.

Commend me to Beleses;
And tell him, ere a year expire, I summon
Him hence to meet me.

HERALD.

Where?

SARDANAPALUS.

At Babylon.
At least from thence he will depart to meet me.

HERALD.

I shall obey you to the letter. [*Exit Herald.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Pania!—
Now, my good Pania!—quick! with what I order'd.

PANIA.

My lord,—the soldiers are already charged.
And, see! they enter.

[*Soldiers enter, and form a Pile about the Throne, &c.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Higher, my good soldiers,
And thicker yet; and see that the foundation
Be such as will not speedily exhaust
Its own too subtle flame; nor yet be quench'd
With aught officious aid would bring to quell it.
Let the throne form the *core* of it; I would not
Leave that, save fraught with fire unquenchable,
To the new comers. Frame the whole as if

'Twere to enkindle the strong tower of our
Inveterate enemies. Now it bears an aspect!
How say you, Pania, will this pile suffice
For a king's obsequies?

PANIA.

Ay, for a kingdom's.
I understand you, now.

SARDANAPALUS.

And blame me?

PANIA.

No—
Let me but fire the pile, and share it with you.

MYRRHA.

That duty 's mine.

PANIA.

A woman's!

MYRRHA.

'Tis the soldier's
Part to die *for* his sovereign, and why not
The woman's with her lover?

PANIA.

'Tis most strange!

MYRRHA.

But not so rare, my Pania, as thou think'st it.
In the mean time, live thou.—Farewell! the pile
Is ready.

PANIA.

I should shame to leave my sovereign
With but a single female to partake
His death.

SARDANAPALUS.

Too many far have heralded
Me to the dust, already. Get thee hence;
Enrich thee.

PANIA.

And live wretched!

SARDANAPALUS.

Think upon
Thy vow;—'tis sacred and irrevocable.

PANIA.

Since it is so, farewell.

SARDANAPALUS.

Search well my chamber,
Feel no remorse at bearing off the gold;
Remember, what you leave you leave the slaves
Who slew me: and when you have borne away
All safe off to your boats, blow one long blast
Upon the trumpet as you quit the palace.
The river's brink is too remote, its stream
Too loud at present to permit the echo
To reach distinctly from its banks. Then fly,—
And as you sail, turn back; but still keep on
Your way along the Euphrates: if you reach
The land of Paphlagonia, where the queen
Is safe with my three sons in Cotta's court,
Say what you *saw* at parting, and request
That she remember what I *said* at one
Parting more mournful still.

PANIA.

That royal hand!

Let me then once more press it to my lips;
And these poor soldiers who throng round you, and
Would fain die with you!

[*The Soldiers and* PANIA *throng round him, kissing his hand and the hem of his robe.*

SARDANAPALUS.

My best! my last friends!
Let's not unman each other—part at once:
All farewells should be sudden, when for ever,
Else they make an eternity of moments,
And clog the last sad sands of life with tears.
Hence, and be happy: trust me, I am not
Now to be pitied; or far more for what
Is past than present;—for the future, 'tis
In the hands of the deities, if such
There be: I shall know soon. Farewell—farewell.

[*Exeunt* PANIA *and Soldiers.*

MYRRHA.

These men were honest: it is comfort still
That our last looks should be on loving faces.

SARDANAPALUS.

And *lovely* ones, my beautiful!—but hear me!
If at this moment, for we now are on
The brink, thou feel'st an inward shrinking from
This leap through flame into the future, say it:
I shall not love thee less; nay, perhaps more,
For yielding to thy nature: and there's time
Yet for thee to escape hence.

MYRRHA.

Shall I light

One of the torches which lie heap'd beneath
The ever-burning lamp that burns without,
Before Baal's shrine, in the adjoining hall?

SARDANAPALUS.

Do so. Is that thy answer?

MYRRHA.

Thou shalt see.

[*Exit* MYRRHA.

SARDANAPALUS (*solus*).

She 's firm. My fathers! whom I will rejoin,
It may be, purified by death from some
Of the gross stains of too material being,
I would not leave your ancient first abode
To the defilement of usurping bondmen;
If I have not kept your inheritance
As ye bequeath'd it, this bright part of it,
Your treasure, your abode, your sacred relics
Of arms, and records, monuments, and spoils,
In which *they* would have revell'd, I bear with me
To you in that absorbing element,
Which most personifies the soul as leaving
The least of matter unconsumed before
Its fiery workings:—and the light of this
Most royal of funereal pyres shall be
Not a mere pillar form'd of cloud and flame,
A beacon in the horizon for a day,
And then a mount of ashes, but a light
To lesson ages, rebel nations, and
Voluptuous princes. Time shall quench full many
A people's records, and a hero's acts;

Sweep empire after empire, like this first
Of empires, into nothing; but even then
Shall spare this deed of mine, and hold it up
A problem few dare imitate, and none
Despise—but, it may be, avoid the life
Which led to such a consummation.

MYRRHA *returns with a lighted Torch in her Hand, and a Cup in the other.*

MYRRHA.

Lo!
I've lit the lamp which lights us to the stars.

SARDANAPALUS.

And the cup?

MYRRHA.

'Tis my country's custom to
Make a libation to the gods.

SARDANAPALUS.

And mine
To make libations amongst men. I've not
Forgot the custom; and although alone,
Will drain one draught in memory of many
A joyous banquet past.

[SARDANAPALUS *takes the cup, and after drinking and tinkling the reversed cup, as a drop falls, exclaims—*

And this libation
Is for the excellent Beleses.

MYRRHA.

Why

Dwells thy mind rather upon that man's name
Than on his mate's in villany?

SARDANAPALUS.

The other
Is a mere soldier, a mere tool, a kind
Of human sword in a friend's hand; the other
Is master-mover of his warlike puppet:
But I dismiss them from my mind.—Yet pause,
My Myrrha! dost thou truly follow me,
Freely and fearlessly?

MYRRHA.

And dost thou think
A Greek girl dare not do for love, that which
An Indian widow braves for custom?

SARDANAPALUS.

Then
We but await the signal.

MYRRHA.

It is long
In sounding.

SARDANAPALUS.

Now, farewell; one last embrace.

MYRRHA.

Embrace, but *not* the last; there is one more.

SARDANAPALUS.

True, the commingling fire will mix our ashes.

MYRRHA.

And pure as is my love to thee, shall they,
Purged from the dross of earth, and earthly passion,
Mix pale with thine. A single thought yet irks me.

SARDANAPALUS.

Say it.

MYRRHA.

It is that no kind hand will gather
The dust of both into one urn.

SARDANAPALUS.

The better:
Rather let them be borne abroad upon
The winds of heaven, and scatter'd into air,
Than be polluted more by human hands
Of slaves and traitors; in this blazing palace,
And its enormous walls of reeking ruin,
We leave a nobler monument than Egypt
Hath piled in her brick mountains, o'er dead kings,
Or *kine*, for none know whether those proud piles
Be for their monarch, or their ox-god Apis:
So much for monuments that have forgotten
Their very record!

MYRRHA.

Then farewell, thou earth!
And loveliest spot of earth! farewell Ionia!
Be thou still free and beautiful, and far
Aloof from desolation! My last prayer
Was for thee, my last thoughts, save *one*, were of thee!

SARDANAPALUS.

And that?

MYRRHA.

Is yours.

[*The trumpet of* PANIA *sounds without.*

SARDANAPALUS.

Hark!

MYRRHA.

Now!

SARDANAPALUS.

Adieu, Assyria!
I loved thee well, my own, my fathers' land,
And better as my country than my kingdom.
I satiated thee with peace and joys; and this
Is my reward! and now I owe thee nothing,
Not even a grave. [*He mounts the pile.*
Now, Myrrha!

MYRRHA.

Art thou ready?

SARDANAPALUS.

As the torch in thy grasp.

[MYRRHA *fires the pile.*

MYRRHA.

'Tis fired! I come.

[*As* MYRRHA *springs forward to throw herself into the flames, the Curtain falls.*

NOTES.

NOTES.

Note 1, page 7, line 2 from bottom.

And thou, my own Ionian Myrrha.

"The Ionian name had been still more comprehensive, having included the Achaians and the Bœotians, who, together with those to whom it was afterwards confined, would make nearly the whole of the Greek nation, and among the orientals it was always the general name for the Greeks."—*Mitford's Greece*, vol. i. p. 199.

Note 2, page 20, lines 21 to 24.

——————— "*Sardanapalus*
"*The king, and son of Anacyndaraxes,*
"*In one day built Anchialus and Tarsus.*
"*Eat, drink, and love; the rest's not worth a fillip.*"

"For this expedition he took only a small chosen body of the phalanx, but all his light troops. In the first day's march he reached Anchialus, a town said to have been founded by the king of Assyria, Sardanapalus. The fortifications, in their magnitude and extent, still in Arrian's time, bore the character of greatness, which the Assyrians appear singu-

larly to have affected in works of the kind. A monument representing Sardanapalus was found there, warranted by an inscription in Assyrian characters, of course in the old Assyrian language, which the Greeks, whether well or ill, interpreted thus: "Sardanapalus, son of Anacyndaraxes, in one day founded Anchialus and Tarsus. Eat, drink, play: all other human joys are not worth a fillip." Supposing this version nearly exact, (for Arrian says it was not quite so), whether the purpose has not been to invite to civil order a people disposed to turbulence, rather than to recommend immoderate luxury, may perhaps reasonably be questioned. What, indeed, could be the object of a king of Assyria in founding such towns in a country so distant from his capital, and so divided from it by an immense extent of sandy deserts and lofty mountains, and, still more, how the inhabitants could be at once in circumstances to abandon themselves to the intemperate joys, which their prince has been supposed to have recommended, is not obvious; but it may deserve observation that, in that line of coast, the southern of Lesser Asia, ruins of cities, evidently of an age after Alexander, yet barely named in history, at this day astonish the adventurous traveller by their magnificence and elegance. Amid the desolation which, under a singularly barbarian government, has for so many centuries been daily spreading in the finest countries of the globe, whether more from soil and climate, or from opportunities for commerce, extraordinary means must have been found for communities to flourish there, whence it may seem that the measures of Sardanapalus were directed by juster views than have been com-

monly ascribed to him; but that monarch having been the last of a dynasty, ended by a revolution, obloquy on his memory would follow of course from the policy of his successors and their partisans.

"The inconsistency of traditions concerning Sardanapalus is striking in Diodorus's account of him."—*Mitford's Greece*, vol. ix. pp. 311, 312, and 313.

THE TWO FOSCARI,

AN HISTORICAL TRAGEDY.

The *father* softens, but the *governor*'s resolved.

CRITIC.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Francis Foscari, Doge of Venice.
Jacopo Foscari, Son of the Doge.
James Loredano, a Patrician.
Marco Memmo, a Chief of the Forty.
Barbarigo, a Senator.
Other Senators, the Council of Ten, Guards, Attendants, &c. &c.

WOMAN.

Marina, Wife of young Foscari.

Scene—the Ducal Palace, Venice.

THE

TWO FOSCARI.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Hall in the Ducal Palace.

Enter LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO, *meeting.*

LOREDANO.

WHERE is the prisoner?

BARBARIGO.

Reposing from
The Question.

LOREDANO.

The hour 's past—fix'd yesterday
For the resumption of his trial.—Let us
Rejoin our colleagues in the council, and
Urge his recall.

BARBARIGO.

Nay, let him profit by
A few brief minutes for his tortured limbs;

He was o'erwrought by the Question yesterday,
And may die under it if now repeated.

LOREDANO.

Well?

BARBARIGO.

I yield not to you in love of justice,
Or hate of the ambitious Foscari,
Father and son, and all their noxious race;
But the poor wretch has suffer'd beyond nature's
Most stoical endurance.

LOREDANO.

Without owning
His crime.

BARBARIGO.

Perhaps without committing any.
But he avow'd the letter to the Duke
Of Milan, and his sufferings half atone for
Such weakness.

LOREDANO.

We shall see.

BARBARIGO.

You, Loredano,
Pursue hereditary hate too far.

LOREDANO.

How far?

BARBARIGO.

To extermination,

LOREDANO.

When they are
Extinct, you may say this.—Let's in to council.

BARBARIGO.

Yet pause—the number of our colleagues is not
Complete yet; two are wanting ere we can
Proceed.

LOREDANO.

And the chief judge, the Doge?

BARBARIGO.

No—he
With more than Roman fortitude is ever
First at the board in this unhappy process
Against his last and only son.

LOREDANO.

True—true—
His *last*.

BARBARIGO.

Will nothing move you?

LOREDANO.

Feels he, think you?

BARBARIGO.

He shows it not.

LOREDANO.

I have mark'd *that*—the wretch!

BARBARIGO.

But yesterday, I hear, on his return
To the ducal chambers, as he pass'd the threshold
The old man fainted.

LOREDANO.

It begins to work, then.

BARBARIGO.

The work is half your own.

LOREDANO.

And should be *all* mine—
My father and my uncle are no more.

BARBARIGO.

I have read their epitaph, which says they died
By poison.

LOREDANO.

When the Doge declared that he
Should never deem himself a sovereign till
The death of Peter Loredano, both
The brothers sicken'd shortly:—he *is* sovereign.

BARBARIGO.

A wretched one.

LOREDANO.

What should they be who make
Orphans?

BARBARIGO.

But *did* the Doge make you so?

LOREDANO.

Yes.

BARBARIGO.

What solid proofs?

LOREDANO.

When princes set themselves
To work in secret, proofs and process are
Alike made difficult; but I have such
Of the first, as shall make the second needless.

BARBARIGO.

But you will move by law?

LOREDANO.

By all the laws
Which he would leave us.

BARBARIGO.

They are such in this,
Our state as render retribution easier
Than 'mongst remoter nations. Is it true
That you have written in your books of commerce,
(The wealthy practice of our highest nobles)
" Doge Foscari, my debtor for the deaths
" Of Marco and Pietro Loredano,
" My sire and uncle?"

LOREDANO.

It is written thus.

BARBARIGO.

And will you leave it unerased?

LOREDANO.

Till balanced.

BARBARIGO.

And how?

[*Two Senators pass over the stage, as in their way to "the Hall of the Council of Ten."*

LOREDANO.

You see the number is complete.
Follow me. [*Exit* LOREDANO.

BARBARIGO (*solus*).

Follow *thee*! I have follow'd long
Thy path of desolation, as the wave
Sweeps after that before it, alike whelming
The wreck that creaks to the wild winds, and wretch

Who shrieks within its riven ribs, as gush
The waters through them; but this son and sire
Might move the elements to pause, and yet
Must I on hardily like them—Oh! would
I could as blindly and remorselessly!—
Lo, where he comes!—Be still, my heart! they are
Thy foes, must be thy victims: wilt thou beat
For those who almost broke thee?

Enter Guards, with young FOSCARI *as prisoner, &c.*

GUARD.

Let him rest.
Signor, take time.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I thank thee, friend, I'm feeble;
But thou may'st stand reproved.

GUARD.

I 'll stand the hazard.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That 's kind!—I meet some pity, but no mercy;
This is the first.

GUARD.

And might be last, did they
Who rule behold us.

BARBARIGO (*advancing to the Guard.*)

There is one who does:
Yet fear not; I will neither be thy judge
Nor thy accuser; though the hour is past,
Wait their last summons—I am of "the Ten,"
And waiting for that summons sanction you

Even by my presence: when the last call sounds,
We'll in together.—Look well to the prisoner!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

What voice is that?—'tis Barbarigo's! Ah!
Our house's foe, and one of my few judges.

BARBARIGO.

To balance such a foe, if such there be,
Thy father sits amongst thy judges.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

True,
He judges.

BARBARIGO.

Then deem not the laws too harsh
Which yield so much indulgence to a sire
As to allow his voice in such high matter
As the state's safety——,

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And his son's. I'm faint;
Let me approach, I pray you, for a breath
Of air, you window which o'erlooks the waters.

Enter an Officer, who whispers BARBARIGO.

BARBARIGO (*to the Guard*).

Let him approach. I must not speak with him
Further than thus; I have transgress'd my duty
In this brief parley, and must now redeem it
Within the Council Chamber. [*Exit* BARBARIGO.

[*Guard conducting* JACOPO FOSCARI *to the window.*

GUARD.

There, sir, 'tis
Open—How feel you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Like a boy—Oh Venice!

GUARD.

And your limbs?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Limbs! how often have they borne me
Bounding o'er yon blue tide, as I have skimm'd
The gondola along in childish race,
And, masqued as a young gondolier, amidst
My gay competitors, noble as I,
Raced for our pleasure in the pride of strength,
While the fair populace of crowding beauties,
Plebeian as patrician, cheer'd us on
With dazzling smiles, and wishes audible,
And waving kerchiefs, and applauding hands,
Even to the goal!—How many a time have I
Cloven with arm still lustier, breast more daring,
The wave all roughen'd; with a swimmer's stroke
Flinging the billows back from my drench'd hair,
And laughing from my lip the audacious brine,
Which kiss'd it like a wine-cup, rising o'er
The waves as they arose, and prouder still
The loftier they uplifted me; and oft,
In wantonness of spirit, plunging down
Into their green and glassy gulfs, and making
My way to shells and sea-weed, all unseen

By those above, till they wax'd fearful; then
Returning with my grasp full of such tokens
As show'd that I had search'd the deep: exulting,
With a far-dashing stroke, and drawing deep
The long-suspended breath, again I spurn'd
The foam which broke around me, and pursued
My track like a sea-bird.—I was a boy then.

GUARD.

Be a man now: there never was more need
Of manhood's strength.

JACOPO FOSCARI (*looking from the lattice*).

My beautiful, my own,
My only Venice—*this is breath!* Thy breeze,
Thine Adrian sea-breeze, how it fans my face!
Thy very winds feel native to my veins,
And cool them into calmness! How unlike
The hot gales of the horrid Cyclades,
Which howl'd about my Candiote dungeon, and
Made my heart sick.

GUARD.

I see the colour comes
Back to your cheek: Heaven send you strength to bear
What more may be imposed!—I dread to think on't.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

They will not banish me again?—No—no,
Let them wring on; I am strong yet.

GUARD.

Confess,
And the rack will be spared you.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I confess'd
Once—twice before; both times they exiled me.

GUARD.

And the third time will slay you.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Let them do so,
So I be buried in my birth-place; better
Be ashes here than aught that lives elsewhere.

GUARD.

And can you so much love the soil which hates you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

The soil!—Oh no, it is the seed of the soil
Which persecutes me; but my native earth
Will take me as a mother to her arms.
I ask no more than a Venetian grave,
A dungeon, what they will, so it be here.

Enter an Officer.

OFFICER.

Bring in the prisoner!

GUARD.

Signor, you hear the order.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ay, I am used to such a summons; 'tis
The third time they have tortured me:—then lend me
Thine arm, [*To the Guard.*

OFFICER.

Take mine, sir; 'tis my duty to
Be nearest to your person.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

You!—you are he
Who yesterday presided o'er my pangs—
Away!—I 'll walk alone.

OFFICER.

As you please, signor;
The sentence was not of my signing, but
I dared not disobey the Council when
They——

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Bade thee stretch me on their horrid engine.
I pray thee touch me not—that is, just now;
The time will come they will renew that order,
But keep off from me till 'tis issued. As
I look upon thy hands my curdling limbs
Quiver with the anticipated wrenching,
And the cold drops strain through my brow, as if——
But onward—I have borne it—I can bear it.—
How looks my father?

OFFICER.

With his wonted aspect.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

So does the earth, and sky, the blue of ocean,
The brightness of our city, and her domes,
The mirth of her Piazza, even now
Its merry hum of nations pierces here,
Even here, into these chambers of the unknown
Who govern, and the unknown and the unnumber'd
Judged and destroy'd in silence,—all things wear
The self-same aspect, to my very sire!

Nothing can sympathize with Foscari,
Not even a Foscari—Sir, I attend you.

[*Exeunt* JACOPO FOSCARI, *Officer*, &c.

Enter MEMMO *and another Senator.*

MEMMO.

He 's gone—we are too late:—think you "the Ten"
Will sit for any length of time to-day?

SENATOR.

They say the prisoner is most obdurate,
Persisting in his first avowal; but
More I know not.

MEMMO.

And that is much; the secrets
Of yon terrific chamber are as hidden
From us, the premier nobles of the state,
As from the people.

SENATOR.

Save the wonted rumours,
Which (like the tales of spectres that are rife
Near ruin'd buildings) never have been proved,
Nor wholly disbelieved: men know as little
Of the state's real acts as of the grave's
Unfathom'd mysteries.

MEMMO.

But with length of time
We gain a step in knowledge, and I look
Forward to be one day of the decemvirs.

SENATOR.

Or Doge?

MEMMO.

Why, no, not if I can avoid it.

SENATOR.

'Tis the first station of the state, and may
Be lawfully desired, and lawfully
Attain'd by noble aspirants.

MEMMO.

To such
I leave it; though born noble, my ambition
Is limited: I 'd rather be an unit
Of an united and imperial "Ten,"
Than shine a lonely, though a gilded cipher.—
Whom have we here? the wife of Foscari?

Enter MARINA *with a female attendant.*

MARINA.

What, no one?—I am wrong, there still are two;
But they are senators.

MEMMO.

Most noble lady,
Command us.

MARINA.

I command!—Alas! my life
Has been one long entreaty, and a vain one.

MEMMO.

I understand thee, but I must not answer.

MARINA (*fiercely*).

True—none dare answer here save on the rack,
Or question save those——

MEMMO (*interrupting her.*)
High-born dame! bethink thee
Where thou now art.

MARINA.
Where I now am!—It was
My husband's father's palace.

MEMMO.
The Duke's palace.

MARINA.
And his son's prison;—true, I have not forgot it;
And if there were no other nearer, bitterer
Remembrances, would thank the illustrious Memmo
For pointing out the pleasures of the place.

MEMMO.
Be calm!

MARINA (*looking up towards heaven*).
I am; but oh, thou eternal God!
Canst *thou* continue so, with such a world?

MEMMO.
Thy husband yet may be absolved.

MARINA.
He is,
In heaven. I pray you, signor senator,
Speak not of that; you are a man of office,
So is the Doge; he has a son at stake,
Now, at this moment, and I have a husband,
Or had, they are there within, or were at least
An hour since, face to face, as judge and culprit:
Will *he* condemn *him?*

MEMMO.

I trust not.

MARINA.

But if
He does not, there are those will sentence both.

MEMMO.

They can.

MARINA.

And with them power and will are one
In wickedness:—my husband's lost!

MEMMO.

Not so;
Justice is judge in Venice.

MARINA.

If it were so
There now would be no Venice. But let it
Live on, so the good die not, till the hour
Of nature's summons; but "the Ten's" is quicker,
And we must wait on't. Ah! a voice of wail!

[*A faint cry within.*

SENATOR.

Hark!

MEMMO.

'Twas a cry of—

MARINA.

No, no; not my husband's—
Not Foscari's.

MEMMO.

The voice was—

MARINA.

Not his: no.
He shriek! No; that should be his father's part,
Not his—not his—he'll die in silence.
[*A faint groan again within.*

MEMMO.

What!
Again?

MARINA.

His voice! it seem'd so: I will not
Believe it. Should he shrink, I cannot cease
To love; but—no—no—no—it must have been
A fearful pang which wrung a groan from him.

SENATOR.

And, feeling for thy husband's wrongs, wouldst thou
Have him bear more than mortal pain, in silence?

MARINA.

We all must bear our tortures. I have not
Left barren the great house of Foscari,
Though they sweep both the Doge and son from life;
I have endured as much in giving life
To those who will succeed them, as they can
In leaving it: but mine were joyful pangs;
And yet they wrung me till I *could* have shriek'd,
But did not, for my hope was to bring forth
Heroes, and would not welcome them with tears.

MEMMO.

All 's silent now.

MARINA.

Perhaps all 's over; but

I will not deem it: he hath nerved himself,
And now defies them.

Enter an Officer hastily.

MEMMO.

How now, friend, what seek you?

OFFICER.

A leech. The prisoner has fainted.

[*Exit Officer.*

MEMMO.

Lady,
'Twere better to retire.

SENATOR (*offering to assist her*).

I pray thee do so.

MARINA.

Off! *I* will tend him.

MEMMO.

You! Remember, lady!
Ingress is given to none within those chambers,
Except "the Ten," and their familiars.

MARINA.

Well,
I know that none who enter there return
As they have enter'd—many never; but
They shall not balk my entrance.

MEMMO.

Alas! this
Is but to expose yourself to harsh repulse,
And worse suspense.

MARINA.

Who shall oppose me?

MEMMO.

They

Whose duty 'tis to do so.

MARINA.

'Tis *their* duty

To trample on all human feelings, all
Ties which bind man to man, to emulate
The fiends, who will one day requite them in
Variety of torturing! Yet I 'll pass.

MEMMO.

It is impossible.

MARINA.

That shall be tried.

Despair defies even despotism: there is
That in my heart would make its way through hosts
With levell'd spears; and think you a few jailors
Shall put me from my path? Give me, then, way;
This is the Doge's palace; I am wife
Of the Duke's son, the *innocent* Duke's son,
And they shall hear this!

MEMMO.

It will only serve

More to exasperate his judges.

MARINA.

What

Are *judges* who give way to anger? they
Who do so are assassins. Give me way.

[*Exit* MARINA.

SENATOR.

Poor lady!

MEMMO.

'Tis mere desperation; she
Will not be admitted o'er the threshold.

SENATOR.

And
Even if she be so, cannot save her husband.
But, see, the officer returns.

[*The Officer passes over the stage with another person.*

MEMMO.

I hardly
Thought that the Ten had even this touch of pity,
Or would permit assistance to this sufferer.

SENATOR.

Pity! Is 't pity to recall to feeling
The wretch too happy to escape to death
By the compassionate trance, poor nature's last
Resource against the tyranny of pain?

MEMMO.

I marvel they condemn him not at once.

SENATOR.

That 's not their policy: they 'd have him live,
Because he fears not death; and banish him,
Because all earth, except his native land,
To him is one wide prison, and each breath
Of foreign air he draws seems a slow poison,
Consuming but not killing.

MEMMO.

Circumstance
Confirms his crimes, but he avows them not.

SENATOR.

None, save the letter, which he says was written,
Address'd to Milan's duke, in the full knowledge
That it would fall into the senate's hands,
And thus he should be re-convey'd to Venice.

MEMMO.

But as a culprit.

SENATOR.

Yes, but to his country;
And that was all he sought, so he avouches.

MEMMO.

The accusation of the bribes was proved.

SENATOR.

Not clearly, and the charge of homicide
Has been annull'd by the death-bed confession
Of Nicolas Erizzo, who slew the late
Chief of "the Ten."

MEMMO.

Then why not clear him?

SENATOR.

That
They ought to answer; for it is well known
That Almoro Donato, as I said,
Was slain by Erizzo for private vengeance.

MEMMO.

There must be more in this strange process than
The apparent crimes of the accused disclose—
But here come two of "the Ten;" let us retire.

[*Exeunt* MEMMO *and Senator.*

Enter LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO.

BARBARIGO (*addressing* LOREDANO.)

That were too much: believe me, 'twas not meet
The trial should go further at this moment.

LOREDANO.

And so the Council must break up, and Justice
Pause in her full career, because a woman
Breaks in on our deliberations?

BARBARIGO.

No,
That 's not the cause; you saw the prisoner's state.

LOREDANO.

And had he not recover'd?

BARBARIGO.

To relapse
Upon the least renewal.

LOREDANO.

'Twas not tried.

BARBARIGO.

'Tis vain to murmur; the majority
In council were against you.

LOREDANO.

Thanks to you, sir,
And the old ducal dotard, who combined
The worthy voices which o'erruled my own.

BARBARIGO.

I am a judge; but must confess that part
Of our stern duty, which prescribes the Question,
And bids us sit and see its sharp infliction,
Makes me wish——

LOREDANO.

What?

BARBARIGO.

That *you* would *sometimes* feel,
As I do always.

LOREDANO.

Go to, you 're a child,
Infirm of feeling as of purpose, blown
About by every breath, shook by a sigh,
And melted by a tear—a precious judge
For Venice! and a worthy statesman to
Be partner in my policy!

BARBARIGO.

He shed
No tears.

LOREDANO.

He cried out twice.

BARBARIGO.

A saint had done so,
Even with the crown of glory in his eye,
At such inhuman artifice of pain
As was forced on him; but he did not cry
For pity; not a word nor groan escaped him,
And those two shrieks were not in supplication,
But wrung from pangs, and follow'd by no prayers.

LOREDANO.

He mutter'd many times between his teeth,
But inarticulately.

BARBARIGO.

That I heard not;
You stood more near him.

LOREDANO.

I did so.

BARBARIGO.

Methought,
To my surprise too, you were touch'd with mercy,
And were the first to call out for assistance
When he was failing.

LOREDANO.

I believed that swoon
His last.

BARBARIGO.

And have I not oft heard thee name
His and his father's death your nearest wish?

LOREDANO.

If he dies innocent, that is to say,
With his guilt unavow'd, he 'll be lamented.

BARBARIGO.

What, wouldst thou slay his memory?

LOREDANO.

Wouldst thou have
His state descend to his children as it must,
If he die unattainted?

BARBARIGO.

War with *them* too?

LOREDANO.

With all their house, till theirs or mine are nothing.

BARBARIGO.

And the deep agony of his pale wife,
And the repress'd convulsion of the high
And princely brow of his old father, which

Broke forth in a slight shuddering, though rarely,
Or in some clammy drops, soon wiped away
In stern serenity; these moved you not?

[*Exit* LOREDANO.

He 's silent in his hate, as Foscari
Was in his suffering; and the poor wretch moved me
More by his silence than a thousand outcries
Could have effected. 'Twas a dreadful sight
When his distracted wife broke through into
The hall of our tribunal, and beheld
What we could scarcely look upon, long used
To such sights. I must think no more of this,
Lest I forget in this compassion for
Our foes their former injuries, and lose
The hold of vengeance Loredano plans
For him and me; but mine would be content
With lesser retribution than he thirsts for,
And I would mitigate his deeper hatred
To milder thoughts; but for the present, Foscari
Has a short hourly respite, granted at
The instance of the elders of the Council,
Moved doubtless by his wife's appearance in
The hall, and his own sufferings.—Lo! they come:
How feeble and forlorn! I cannot bear
To look on them again in this extremity:
I 'll hence, and try to soften Loredano.

[*Exit* BARBARIGO.

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Hall in the DOGE's *Palace.*

The DOGE *and a* SENATOR.

SENATOR.

Is it your pleasure to sign the report
Now, or postpone it till to-morrow?

DOGE.

Now;
I overlook'd it yesterday: it wants
Merely the signature. Give me the pen—
[*The* DOGE *sits down and signs the paper.*
There, signor.

SENATOR (*looking at the paper.*)

You have forgot; it is not sign'd.

DOGE.

Not sign'd? Ah, I perceive my eyes begin
To wax more weak with age. I did not see
That I had dipp'd the pen without effect.

SENATOR (*dipping the pen into the ink, and placing the paper before the* DOGE.)

Your hand, too, shakes, my lord: allow me, thus—

DOGE.

'Tis done, I thank you.

SENATOR.

Thus the act confirm'd
By you and by "the Ten," gives peace to Venice.

DOGE.

'Tis long since she enjoy'd it: may it be
As long ere she resume her arms!

SENATOR.

'Tis almost
Thirty-four years of nearly ceaseless warfare
With the Turk, or the powers of Italy;
The state had need of some repose.

DOGE.

No doubt:
I found her queen of ocean, and I leave her
Lady of Lombardy; it is a comfort
That I have added to her diadem
The gems of Brescia and Ravenna; Crema
And Bergamo no less are hers; her realm
By land has grown by thus much in my reign,
While her sea-sway has not shrunk.

SENATOR.

'Tis most true,
And merits all our country's gratitude.

DOGE.

Perhaps so.

SENATOR.

Which should be made manifest.

DOGE.

I have not complain'd, sir.

SENATOR.

My good lord, forgive me.

DOGE.

For what?

SENATOR.

My heart bleeds for you.

DOGE.

For me, signor?

SENATOR.

And for your——

DOGE.

Stop!

SENATOR.

It must have way, my lord:
I have too many duties towards you
And all your house, for past and present kindness,
Not to feel deeply for your son.

DOGE.

Was this
In your commission?

SENATOR.

What, my lord?

DOGE.

This prattle
Of things you know not: but the treaty 's sign'd;
Return with it to them who sent you.

SENATOR.

I
Obey. I had in charge, too, from the Council
That you would fix an hour for their re-union.

DOGE.

Say, when they will—now, even at this moment,
If it so please them: I am the state's servant.

SENATOR.

They would accord some time for your repose.

DOGE.

I have no repose, that is, none which shall cause
The loss of an hour's time unto the state.
Let them meet when they will, I shall be found
Where I should be, and *what* I have been ever.

[*Exit* SENATOR.

[*The* DOGE *remains in silence.*

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT.

Prince!

DOGE.

Say on.

ATTENDANT.

The illustrious lady Foscari
Requests an audience.

DOGE.

Bid her enter. Poor
Marina! [*Exit Attendant.*

[*The* DOGE *remains in silence as before.*

Enter MARINA.

MARINA.

I have ventured, father, on
Your privacy.

DOGE.

I have none from you, my child.
Command my time, when not commanded by
The state.

MARINA.

I wish'd to speak to you of *him.*

DOGE.

Your husband?

MARINA.

And your son.

DOGE.

Proceed, my daughter!

MARINA.

I had obtained permission from "the Ten"
To attend my husband for a limited number
Of hours.

DOGE.

You had so.

MARINA.

'Tis revoked.

DOGE.

By whom?

MARINA.

"The Ten."—When we had reach'd "the Bridge of Sighs,"
Which I prepared to pass with Foscari,
The gloomy guardian of that passage first
Demurr'd: a messenger was sent back to
"The Ten;" but as the court no longer sate,
And no permission had been given in writing,
I was thrust back, with the assurance that

Until that high tribunal re-assembled
The dungeon walls must still divide us.

DOGE.

True,
The form has been omitted in the haste
With which the court adjourn'd, and till it meets
'Tis dubious.

MARINA.

Till it meets! and when it meets,
They 'll torture him again; and he and I
Must purchase by renewal of the rack
The interview of husband and of wife,
The holiest tie beneath the heavens?—Oh God!
Dost thou see this?

DOGE.

Child—child——

MARINA (*abruptly*).

Call *me* not "child!"
You soon will have no children—you deserve none—
You, who can talk thus calmly of a son
In circumstances which would call forth tears
Of blood from Spartans! Though these did not weep
Their boys who died in battle, is it written
That they beheld them perish piecemeal, nor
Stretch'd forth a hand to save them?

DOGE.

You behold me:
I cannot weep—I would I could; but if
Each white hair on this head were a young life,
This ducal cap the diadem of earth,

This ducal ring with which I wed the waves
A talisman to still them—I 'd give all
For him.

MARINA.

With less he surely might be saved.

DOGE.

That answer only shows you know not Venice.
Alas! how should you? she knows not herself,
In all her mystery. Hear me—they who aim
At Foscari, aim no less at his father;
The sire's destruction would not save the son;
They work by different means to the same end,
And that is——but they have not conquer'd yet.

MARINA.

But they have crush'd.

DOGE.

Nor crush'd as yet—I live.

MARINA.

And your son,—how long will he live?

DOGE.

I trust,
For all that yet is past, as many years
And happier than his father. The rash boy,
With womanish impatience to return,
Hath ruin'd all by that detected letter;
A high crime, which I neither can deny
Nor palliate, as parent or as Duke:
Had he but borne a little, little longer
His Candiote exile, I had hopes——he has quench'd them—
He must return.

MARINA.

To exile?

DOGE

I have said it.

MARINA.

And can I not go with him?

DOGE

You well know
This prayer of yours was twice denied before
By the assembled "Ten," and hardly now
Will be accorded to a third request,
Since aggravated errors on the part
Of your lord renders them still more austere.

MARINA.

Austere? Atrocious! The old human fiends,
With one foot in the grave, with dim eyes, strange
To tears save drops of dotage, with long white
And scanty hairs, and shaking hands, and heads
As palsied as their hearts are hard, they council,
Cabal, and put men's lives out, as if life
Were no more than the feelings long extinguish'd
In their accursed bosoms.

DOGE.

You know not——

MARINA.

I do—I do—and so should you, methinks—
That these are demons: could it be else that
Men, who have been of women born and suckled—
Who have loved, or talk'd at least of love—have given

Their hands in sacred vows—have danced their babes
Upon their knees, perhaps have mourn'd above them
In pain, in peril, or in death—who are,
Or were at least in seeming human, could
Do as they have done by yours, and you yourself,
You, who abet them?

DOGE.

I forgive this, for
You know not what you say.

MARINA.

You know it well,
And feel it nothing.

DOGE.

I have borne so much,
That words have ceased to shake me.

MARINA.

Oh, no doubt!
You have seen your son's blood flow, and your flesh shook not;
And, after that, what are a woman's words?
No more than woman's tears, that they should shake you.

DOGE.

Woman, this clamorous grief of thine, I tell thee,
Is no more in the balance weigh'd with that
Which——but I pity thee, my poor Marina!

MARINA.

Pity my husband, or I cast it from me;
Pity thy son! *Thou* pity!—'tis a word
Strange to thy heart—how came it on thy lips?

DOGE.

I must bear these reproaches, though they wrong me.
Couldst thou but read——

MARINA.

'Tis not upon thy brow,
Nor in thine eyes, nor in thine acts,—where then
Should I behold this sympathy? or shall?

DOGE (*pointing downwards*).

There!

MARINA.

In the earth?

DOGE.

To which I am tending: when
It lies upon this heart, far lightlier, though
Loaded with marble, than the thoughts which press it
Now, you will know me better.

MARINA.

Are you, then,
Indeed, thus to be pitied?

DOGE.

Pitied! None
Shall ever use that base word, with which men
Cloke their soul's hoarded triumph, as a fit one
To mingle with my name; that name shall be,
As far as *I* have borne it, what it was
When I received it.

MARINA.

But for the poor children
Of him thou canst not, or thou wilt not save:
You were the last to bear it.

DOGE.

Would it were so!
Better for him he never had been born,
Better for me.—I have seen our house dishonour'd.

MARINA.

That 's false! A truer, nobler, trustier heart,
More loving, or more loyal, never beat
Within a human breast. I would not change
My exiled, persecuted, mangled husband,
Oppress'd but not disgraced, crush'd, overwhelm'd,
Alive, or dead, for prince or paladin
In story or in fable, with a world
To back his suit. Dishonour'd!—*he* dishonour'd!
I tell thee, Doge, 'tis Venice is dishonour'd;
His name shall be her foulest, worst reproach,
For what he suffers, not for what he did.
'Tis ye who are all traitors, tyrant!—ye!
Did you but love your country like this victim
Who totters back in chains to tortures, and
Submits to all things rather than to exile,
You 'd fling yourselves before him, and implore
His grace for your enormous guilt.

DOGE.

He was
Indeed all you have said. I better bore
The deaths of the two sons Heaven took from me
Than Jacopo's disgrace.

MARINA.

That word again?

DOGE.

Has he not been condemn'd?

MARINA.

Is none but guilt so?

DOGE.

Time may restore his memory—I would hope so.
He was my pride, my——but 'tis useless now—
I am not given to tears, but wept for joy
When he was born: those drops were ominous.

MARINA.

I say he 's innocent! And were he not so,
Is our own blood and kin to shrink from us
In fatal moments?

DOGE.

I shrank not from him:
But I have other duties than a father's;
The state would not dispense me from those duties;
Twice I demanded it, but was refused,
They must then be fulfill'd.

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT.

A message from
" The Ten."

DOGE.

Who bears it?

ATTENDANT.

Noble Loredano.

DOGE.

He!—but admit him. [*Exit Attendant.*

MARINA.

Must I then retire?

DOGE.

Perhaps it is not requisite, if this
Concerns your husband, and if not——Well, signor,
Your pleasure! [*To* LOREDANO *entering*.

LOREDANO.

I bear that of "the Ten."

DOGE.

They
Have chosen well their envoy.

LOREDANO.

'Tis *their* choice
Which leads me here.

DOGE.

It does their wisdom honour,
And no less to their courtesy.—Proceed.

LOREDANO.

We have decided.

DOGE.

We?

LOREDANO.

"The Ten" in council.

DOGE.

What! have they met again, and met without
Apprizing me?

LOREDANO.

They wish'd to spare your feelings,
No less than age.

DOGE.

That's new—when spared they either?
I thank them, notwithstanding.

LOREDANO.

You know well
That they have power to act at their discretion,
With or without the presence of the Doge.

DOGE.

'Tis some years since I learn'd this, long before
I became Doge, or dream'd of such advancement.
You need not school me, signor: I sate in
That council when you were a young patrician.

LOREDANO.

True, in my father's time; I have heard him and
The admiral, his brother, say as much.
Your highness may remember them; they both
Died suddenly.

DOGE.

And if they did so, better
So die than live on lingeringly in pain.

LOREDANO.

No doubt; yet most men like to live their days out.

DOGE.

And did not they?

LOREDANO.

The grave knows best: they died,
As I said, suddenly.

DOGE.

Is that so strange
That you repeat the word emphatically?

LOREDANO.

So far from strange, that never was there death
In my mind half so natural as theirs.
Think *you* not so?

DOGE.

What should I think of mortals?

LOREDANO.

That they have mortal foes.

DOGE.

I understand you;
Your sires were mine, and you are heir in all things.

LOREDANO.

You best know if I should be so.

DOGE.

I do.
Your fathers were my foes, and I have heard
Foul rumours were abroad; I have also read
Their epitaph, attributing their deaths
To poison. 'Tis perhaps as true as most
Inscriptions upon tombs, and yet no less
A fable.

LOREDANO.

Who dares say so?

DOGE.

I!—'Tis true
Your fathers were mine enemies, as bitter
As their son e'er can be, and I no less
Was theirs; but I was *openly* their foe:
I never work'd by plot in council, nor
Cabal in commonwealth, nor secret means

Of practice against life by steel or drug.
The proof is, your existence.

LOREDANO.

I fear not.

DOGE.

You have no cause, being what I am; but were I
That you would have me thought, you long ere now
Were past the sense of fear. Hate on; I care not.

LOREDANO.

I never yet knew that a noble's life
In Venice had to dread a Doge's frown,
That is, by open means.

DOGE.

But I, good signor,
Am, or at least *was*, more than a mere duke,
In blood, in mind, in means; and that they know
Who dreaded to elect me, and have since
Striven all they dare to weigh me down: be sure,
Before or since that period, had I held you
At so much price as to require your absence,
A word of mine had set such spirits to work
As would have made you nothing. But in all things
I have observed the strictest reverence;
Not for the laws alone, for those *you* have strain'd
(I do not speak of *you* but as a single
Voice of the many) somewhat beyond what
I could enforce for my authority
Were I disposed to brawl; but, as I said,
I have observed with veneration, like
A priest's for the high altar, even unto

The sacrifice of my own blood and quiet,
Safety, and all save honour, the decrees,
The health, the pride, and welfare of the state.
And now, sir, to your business.

LOREDANO.

'Tis decreed,
That, without farther repetition of
The Question, or continuance of the trial,
Which only tends to show how stubborn guilt is,
(" The Ten," dispensing with the stricter law
Which still prescribes the Question till a full
Confession, and the prisoner partly having
Avow'd his crime in not denying that
The letter to the Duke of Milan's his,)
James Foscari return to banishment,
And sail in the same galley which convey'd him.

MARINO.

Thank God! At least they will not drag him more
Before that horrible tribunal. Would he
But think so, to my mind the happiest doom,
Not he alone, but all who dwell here, could
Desire, were to escape from such a land.

DOGE.

That is not a Venetian thought, my daughter.

MARINA.

No, 'twas too human. May I share his exile?

LOREDANO.

Of this " the Ten" said nothing.

MARINA.

So I thought:

That were too human, also. But it was not
Inhibited?

LOREDANO.

It was not named.

MARINA (*to the* DOGE).

Then, father,
Surely you can obtain or grant me thus much:
[*To* LOREDANO.
And you, sir, not oppose my prayer to be
Permitted to accompany my husband.

DOGE.

I will endeavour.

MARINA.

And you, signor?

LOREDANO.

Lady!
'Tis not for me to anticipate the pleasure
Of the tribunal.

MARINA.

Pleasure! what a word
To use for the decrees of——

DOGE.

Daughter, know you
In what a presence you pronounce these things?

MARINA.

A prince's and his subject's.

LOREDANO.

Subject!

MARINA.

Oh!
It galls you:—well, you are his equal, as

You think; but that you are not, nor would be,
Were he a peasant:—well, then, you're a prince,
A princely noble; and what then am I?

LOREDANO.

The offspring of a noble house.

MARINA.

And wedded
To one as noble. What or whose, then, is
The presence that should silence my free thoughts?

LOREDANO.

The presence of your husband's judges.

DOGE.

And
The deference due even to the lightest word
That falls from those who rule in Venice.

MARINA.

Keep
Those maxims for your mass of scared mechanics,
Your merchants, your Dalmatian and Greek slaves,
Your tributaries, your dumb citizens,
And mask'd nobility, your sbirri, and
Your spies, your galley and your other slaves,
To whom your midnight carryings off and drownings,
Your dungeons next the palace roofs, or under
The water's level; your mysterious meetings,
And unknown dooms, and sudden executions,
Your "Bridge of Sighs," your strangling chamber, and
Your torturing instruments, have made ye seem
The beings of another and worse world!
Keep such for them: I fear ye not. I know ye;

Have known and proved your worst, in the infernal
Process of my poor husband! Treat me as
Ye treated him:—you did so, in so dealing
With him. Then what have I to fear *from* you,
Even if I were of fearful nature, which
I trust I am not?

DOGE.

You hear, she speaks wildly.

MARINA.

Not wisely, yet not wildly.

LOREDANO.

Lady! words
Utter'd within these walls, I bear no further
Than to the threshold, saving such as pass
Between the Duke and me on the state's service.
Doge! have you aught in answer?

DOGE.

Something from
The Doge; it may be also from a parent.

LOREDANO.

My mission *here* is to the *Doge*.

DOGE.

Then say
The Doge will choose his own embassador,
Or state in person what is meet; and for
The father——

LOREDANO.

I remember *mine*.—Farewell!
I kiss the hands of the illustrious lady,
And bow me to the Duke. [*Exit* LOREDANO.

MARINA

Are you content?

DOGE.

I am what you behold.

MARINA.

And that's a mystery.

DOGE.

All things are so to mortals; who can read them
Save he who made? or, if they can, the few
And gifted spirits, who have studied long
That loathsome volume—man, and pored upon
Those black and bloody leaves his heart and brain,
But learn a magic which recoils upon
The adept who pursues it: all the sins
We find in others, nature made our own;
All our advantages are those of fortune;
Birth, wealth, health, beauty, are her accidents,
And when we cry out against Fate, 'twere well
We should remember Fortune can take nought
Save what she *gave*—the rest was nakedness,
And lusts, and appetites, and vanities,
The universal heritage, to battle
With as we may, and least in humblest stations,
Where hunger swallows all in one low want,
And the original ordinance, that man
Must sweat for his poor pittance, keeps all passions
Aloof, save fear of famine! All is low,
And false, and hollow—clay from first to last,
The prince's urn no less than potter's vessel.
Our fame is in men's breath, our lives upon

Less than their breath; our durance upon days,
Our days on seasons; our whole being on
Something which is not *us!*—So, we are slaves,
The greatest as the meanest—nothing rests
Upon our will; the will itself no less
Depends upon a straw than on a storm;
And when we think we lead, we are most led,
And still towards death, a thing which comes as much
Without our act or choice, as birth, so that
Methinks we must have sinn'd in some old world,
And *this* is hell: the best is, that it is not
Eternal.

MARINA.

These are things we cannot judge
On earth.

DOGE.

And how then shall we judge each other,
Who are all earth, and I, who am call'd upon
To judge my son? I have administer'd
My country faithfully—victoriously—
I dare them to the proof, the *chart* of what
She was and is: my reign has doubled realms;
And, in reward, the gratitude of Venice
Has left, or is about to leave, *me* single.

MARINA.

And Foscari? I do not think of such things,
So I be left with him.

DOGE.

You shall be so;
Thus much they cannot well deny.

MARINA.

And if
They should, I will fly with him.

DOGE.

That can ne'er be.
And whither would you fly?

MARINA.

I know not, reck not—
To Syria, Egypt, to the Ottoman—
Any where, where we might respire unfetter'd,
And live nor girt by spies, nor liable
To edicts of inquisitors of state.

DOGE.

What, wouldst thou have a renegade for husband,
And turn him into traitor?

MARINA.

He is none!
The country is the traitress, which thrusts forth
Her best and bravest from her. Tyranny
Is far the worst of treasons. Dost thou deem
None rebels except subjects? The prince who
Neglects or violates his trust is more
A brigand than the robber-chief.

DOGE.

I cannot
Charge me with such a breach of faith.

MARINA.

No; thou
Observ'st, obey'st, such laws as make old Draco's
A code of mercy by comparison.

DOGE.

I found the law; I did not make it. Were I
A subject, still I might find parts and portions
Fit for amendment; but as prince, I never
Would change, for the sake of my house, the charter
Left by our fathers.

MARINA.

Did they make it for
The ruin of their children?

DOGE.

Under such laws, Venice
Has risen to what she is—a state to rival
In deeds, and days, and sway, and, let me add,
In glory, (for we have had Roman spirits
Amongst us), all that history has bequeath'd
Of Rome and Carthage in their best times, when
The people sway'd by senates.

MARINA.

Rather say,
Groan'd under the stern oligarchs.

DOGE.

Perhaps so;
But yet subdued the world: in such a state
An individual, be he richest of
Such rank as is permitted, or the meanest,
Without a name, is alike nothing, when
The policy, irrevocably tending
To one great end, must be maintain'd in vigour.

MARINA.

This means that you are more a Doge than father.

DOGE.

It means, I am more citizen than either.
If we had not for many centuries
Had thousands of such citizens, and shall,
I trust, have still such, Venice were no city.

MARINA.

Accursed be the city where the laws
Would stifle nature's!

DOGE.

Had I as many sons
As I have years, I would have given them all,
Not without feeling, but I would have given them
To the state's service, to fulfil her wishes
On the flood, in the field, or, if it must be,
As it, alas! has been, to ostracism,
Exile, or chains, or whatsoever worse
She might decree.

MARINA.

And this is patriotism?
To me it seems the worst barbarity.
Let me seek out my husband: the sage "Ten,"
With all its jealousy, will hardly war
So far with a weak woman as deny me
A moment's access to his dungeon.

DOGE.

I'll
So far take on myself, as order that
You may be admitted.

MARINA.

And what shall I say
To Foscari from his father?

DOGE.

That he obey
The laws.

MARINA.

And nothing more? Will you not see him
Ere he depart? It may be the last time.

DOGE.

The last!—my boy!—the last time I shall see
My last of children! Tell him I will come.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Prison of JACOPO FOSCARI.

JACOPO FOSCARI (*solus*).

No light, save yon faint gleam, which shows me walls
Which never echo'd but to sorrow's sounds,
The sigh of long imprisonment, the step
Of feet on which the iron clank'd, the groan
Of death, the imprecation of despair!
And yet for this I have return'd to Venice,
With some faint hope, 'tis true, that time, which wears
The marble down, had worn away the hate
Of men's hearts; but I knew them not, and here
Must I consume my own, which never beat
For Venice but with such a yearning as
The dove has for her distant nest, when wheeling
High in the air on her return to greet
Her callow brood. What letters are these which
[*Approaching the wall.*
Are scrawl'd along the inexorable wall?
Will the gleam let me trace them? Ah! the names
Of my sad predecessors in this place,

The dates of their despair, the brief words of
A grief too great for many. This stone page
Holds like an epitaph their history,
And the poor captive's tale is graven on
His dungeon barrier, like the lover's record
Upon the bark of some tall tree, which bears
His own and his beloved's name. Alas!
I recognize some names familiar to me,
And blighted like to mine, which I will add,
Fittest for such a chronicle as this,
Which only can be read, as writ, by wretches.

[*He engraves his name.*

Enter a Familiar of "the Ten."

FAMILIAR.

I bring you food.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I pray you set it down;
I am past hunger: but my lips are parch'd—
The water!

FAMILIAR.

There.

JACOPO FOSCARI (*after drinking*).

I thank you: I am better.

FAMILIAR.

I am commanded to inform you that
Your further trial is postponed.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Till when?

FAMILIAR.

I know not.—It is also in my orders
That your illustrious lady be admitted

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ah! they relent, then—I had ceased to hope it:
'Twas time.

Enter MARINA.

MARINA.

My best beloved!

JACOPO FOSCARI (*embracing her*).

My true wife,
And only friend! What happiness!

MARINA.

We'll part
No more.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

How! wouldst thou share a dungeon?

MARINA.

Ay,
The rack, the grave, all—any thing with thee,
But the tomb last of all, for there we shall
Be ignorant of each other, yet I will
Share that—all things except new separation;
It is too much to have survived the first.
How dost thou? How are those worn limbs? Alas!
Why do I ask? Thy paleness——

JACOPO FOSCARI.

'Tis the joy
Of seeing thee again so soon, and so

Without expectancy has sent the blood
Back to my heart, and left my cheeks like thine,
For thou art pale too, my Marina!

MARINA.

'Tis
The gloom of this eternal cell, which never
Knew sunbeam, and the sallow sullen glare
Of the familiar's torch, which seems akin
To darkness more than light, by lending to
The dungeon vapours its bituminous smoke,
Which cloud whate'er we gaze on, even thine eyes—
No, not thine eyes—they sparkle—how they sparkle!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And thine!—but I am blinded by the torch.

MARINA.

As I had been without it. Couldst thou see here?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Nothing at first; but use and time had taught me
Familiarity with what was darkness;
And the gray twilight of such glimmerings as
Glide through the crevices made by the winds
Was kinder to mine eyes than the full sun,
When gorgeously o'ergilding any towers
Save those of Venice; but a moment ere
Thou camest hither I was busy writing.

MARINA.

What?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My name: look, 'tis there—recorded next

The name of him who here preceded me,
If dungeon dates say true.

MARINA.

And what of him?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

These walls are silent of men's ends; they only
Seem to hint shrewdly of them. Such stern walls
Were never piled on high save o'er the dead,
Or those who soon must be so—*What of him?*
Thou askest.—What of me? may soon be ask'd,
With the like answer—doubt and dreadful surmise—
Unless thou tell'st my tale.

MARINA.

I speak of thee!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And wherefore not? All then shall speak of me:
The tyranny of silence is not lasting,
And, though events be hidden, just men's groans
Will burst all cerement, even a living grave's!
I do not *doubt* my memory, but my life;
And neither do I fear.

MARINA.

Thy life is safe.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And liberty?

MARINA.

The mind should make its own.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That has a noble sound; but 'tis a sound,
A music most impressive, but too transient:

The mind is much; but is not all. The mind
Hath nerved me to endure the risk of death,
And torture positive, far worse than death
(If death be a deep sleep), without a groan,
Or with a cry which rather shamed my judges
Than me; but 'tis not all, for there are things
More woful—such as this small dungeon, where
I may breathe many years.

MARINA.

Alas! and this
Small dungeon is all that belongs to thee
Of this wide realm, of which thy sire is prince.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That thought would scarcely aid me to endure it.
My doom is common, many are in dungeons,
But none like mine, so near their father's palace;
But then my heart is sometimes high, and hope
Will stream along those moted rays of light
Peopled with dusty atoms, which afford
Our only day; for, save the jailor's torch,
And a strange firefly, which was quickly caught
Last night in yon enormous spider's net,
I ne'er saw aught here like a ray. Alas!
I know if mind may bear us up, or no,
For I have such, and shown it before men;
It sinks in solitude: my soul is social.

MARINA.

I will be with thee.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ah! if it were so!

But *that* they never granted—nor will grant,
And I shall be alone: no men—no books—
Those lying likenesses of lying men.
I ask'd for even those outlines of their kind,
Which they term annals, history, what you will,
Which men bequeath as portraits, and they were
Refused me, so these walls have been my study,
More faithful pictures of Venetian story,
With all their blank, or dismal stains, than is
The hall not far from hence, which bears on high
Hundreds of doges, and their deeds and dates.

MARINA.

I come to tell thee the result of their
Last council on thy doom.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I know it—look!

[*He points to his limbs, as referring to the tortures which he had undergone.*

MARINA.

No—no—no more of that: even they relent
From that atrocity.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

What then?

MARINA.

That you
Return to Candia.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Then my last hope's gone.
I could endure my dungeon, for 'twas Venice;
I could support the torture, there was something

In my native air that buoy'd my spirits up
Like a ship on the ocean toss'd by storms,
But proudly still bestriding the high waves,
And holding on its course; but *there*, afar,
In that accursed isle of slaves, and captives,
And unbelievers, like a stranded wreck,
My very soul seem'd mouldering in my bosom,
And piecemeal I shall perish, if remanded.

MARINA.

And *here?*

JACOPO FOSCARI.

At once—by better means, as briefer.
What! would they even deny me my sires' sepulchre,
As well as home and heritage?

MARINA.

My husband!
I have sued to accompany thee hence,
And not so hopelessly. This love of thine
For an ungrateful and tyrannic soil
Is passion, and not patriotism; for me,
So I could see thee with a quiet aspect,
And the sweet freedom of the earth and air,
I would not cavil about climes or regions.
This crowd of palaces and prisons is not
A paradise; its first inhabitants
Were wretched exiles.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Well I know *how* wretched!

MARINA.

And yet you see how from their banishment

Before the Tartar into these salt isles,
Their antique energy of mind, all that
Remain'd of Rome for their inheritance,
Created by degrees an ocean-Rome;
And shall an evil, which so often leads
To good, depress thee thus?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Had I gone forth
From my own land, like the old patriarchs, seeking
Another region, with their flocks and herds;
Had I been cast out like the Jews from Zion,
Or like our fathers, driven by Attila
From fertile Italy to barren islets,
I would have given some tears to my late country,
And many thoughts; but afterwards address'd
Myself, with those about me, to create
A new home and fresh state: perhaps I could
Have borne this—though I know not.

MARINA.

Wherefore not?
It was the lot of millions, and must be
The fate of myriads more.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ay—we but hear
Of the survivors' toil in their new lands,
Their numbers and success; but who can number
The hearts which broke in silence of that parting,
Or after their departure; of that malady*

* The calenture.

Which calls up green and native fields to view
From the rough deep, with such identity
To the poor exile's fever'd eye, that he
Can scarcely be restrain'd from treading them?
That melody*, which out of tones and tunes
Collects such pasture for the longing sorrow
Of the sad mountaineer, when far away
From his snow canopy of cliffs and clouds,
That he feeds on the sweet, but poisonous thought,
And dies. You call this *weakness!* It is strength,
I say,—the parent of all honest feeling.
He who loves not his country, can love nothing.

MARINA.

Obey her, then; 'tis she that puts thee forth.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ay, there it is: 'tis like a mother's curse
Upon my soul—the mark is set upon me.
The exiles you speak of went forth by nations,
Their hands upheld each other by the way,
Their tents were pitch'd together—I 'm alone.

MARINA.

You shall be so no more—I will go with thee.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My best Marina!—and our children?

MARINA.

They,
I fear, by the prevention of the state's
Abhorrent policy (which holds all ties

* Alluding to the Swiss air and its effects.

As threads, which may be broken at her pleasure),
Will not be suffer'd to proceed with us.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And canst thou leave them?

MARINA.

Yes. With many a pang.
But—I *can* leave them, children as they are,
To teach you to be less a child. From this
Learn you to sway your feelings, when exacted
By duties paramount; and 'tis our first
On earth to bear.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Have I not borne?

MARINA.

Too much
From tyrannous injustice, and enough
To teach you not to shrink now from a lot,
Which, as compared with what you have undergone
Of late, is mercy.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ah! you never yet
Were far away from Venice, never saw
Her beautiful towers in the receding distance,
While every furrow of the vessel's track
Seem'd ploughing deep into your heart; you never
Saw day go down upon your native spires
So calmly with its gold and crimson glory,
And after dreaming a disturbed vision
Of them and theirs, awoke and found them not.

MARINA.

I will divide this with you. Let us think
Of our departure from this much-loved city
(Since you must *love* it, as it seems), and this
Chamber of state, her gratitude allots you.
Our children will be cared for by the Doge,
And by my uncles: we must sail ere night.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That 's sudden. Shall I not behold my father?

MARINA.

You will.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Where?

MARINA.

Here or in the ducal chamber—
He said not which. I would that you could bear
Your exile as he bears it.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Blame him not.
I sometimes murmur for a moment; but
He could not now act otherwise. A show
Of feeling or compassion on his part
Would have but drawn upon his aged head
Suspicion from "the Ten," and upon mine
Accumulated ills.

MARINA.

Accumulated!
What pangs are those they have spared you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That of leaving
Venice without beholding him or you,

Which might have been forbidden now, as 'twas
Upon my former exile.

MARINA.

That is true,
And thus far I am also the state's debtor,
And shall be more so when I see us both
Floating on the free waves—away—away—
Be it to the earth's end, from this abhorr'd,
Unjust, and——

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Curse it not. If I am silent,
Who dares accuse my country?

MARINA.

Men and angels!
The blood of myriads reeking up to heaven,
The groans of slaves in chains, and men in dungeons,
Mothers, and wives, and sons, and sires, and subjects,
Held in the bondage of ten bald-heads; and
Though last, not least, *thy silence*. *Couldst thou* say
Aught in its favour, who would praise like *thee*?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Let us address us then, since so it must be,
To our departure. Who comes here?

Enter LOREDANO, *attended by Familiars.*

LOREDANO (*to the Familiars*).

Retire,
But leave the torch. [*Exeunt the two Familiars.*

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Most welcome, noble signor.

I did not deem this poor place could have drawn
Such presence hither.

LOREDANO.

'Tis not the first time
I have visited these places.

MARINA.

Nor would be
The last, were all men's merits well rewarded.
Came you here to insult us, or remain
As spy upon us, or as hostage for us?

LOREDANO.

Neither are of my office, noble lady!
I am sent hither to your husband, to
Announce "the Ten's" decree.

MARINA.

That tenderness
Has been anticipated: it is known.

LOREDANO.

As how?

MARINA.

I have inform'd him, not so gently,
Doubtless, as your nice feelings would prescribe,
The indulgence of your colleagues; but he knew it.
If you come for our thanks, take them, and hence!
The dungeon gloom is deep enough without you,
And full of reptiles, not less loathsome, though
Their sting is honester.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I pray you, calm you:
What can avail such words?

MARINA.

To let him know
That he is known.

LOREDANO.

Let the fair dame preserve
Her sex's privilege.

MARINA.

I have some sons, sir,
Will one day thank you better.

LOREDANO.

You do well
To nurse them wisely. Foscari—you know
Your sentence, then?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Return to Candia?

LOREDANO.

True—
For life.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Not long.

LOREDANO.

I said—for *life*.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And I
Repeat—not long.

LOREDANO.

A year's imprisonment
In Canea—afterwards the freedom of
The whole isle.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Both the same to me: the after
Freedom as is the first imprisonment.
Is 't true my wife accompanies me?

LOREDANO.

Yes,
If she so wills it.

MARINA.

Who obtain'd that justice?

LOREDANO.

One who wars not with women.

MARINA.

But oppresses
Men: howsoever, let him have *my* thanks
For the only boon I would have ask'd or taken
From him or such as he is.

LOREDANO.

He receives them
As they are offer'd.

MARINA.

May they thrive with him
So much!—no more.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Is this, sir, your whole mission?
Because we have brief time for preparation,
And you perceive your presence doth disquiet
This lady, of a house noble as yours.

MARINA.

Nobler!

LOREDANO.

How nobler?

MARINA.

As more generous!
We say the "generous steed" to express the purity
Of his high blood. Thus much I 've learnt, although
Venetian (who see few steeds save of bronze),
From those Venetians who have skimm'd the coasts
Of Egypt, and her neighbour Araby:
And why not say as soon "the *generous man*?"
If race be aught, it is in qualities
More than in years; and mine, which is as old
As yours, is better in its product, nay—
Look not so stern—but get you back, and pore
Upon your genealogic tree's most green
Of leaves and most mature of fruits, and there
Blush to find ancestors, who would have blush'd
For such a son—thou cold inveterate hater!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Again, Marina!

MARINA.

Again! *still*, Marina.
See you not, he comes here to glut his hate
With a last look upon our misery?
Let him partake it!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

That were difficult.

MARINA.

Nothing more easy. He partakes it now—
Ay, he may veil beneath a marble brow

And sneering lip the pang, but he partakes it.
A few brief words of truth shame the devil's servants
No less than master; I have probed his soul
A moment, as the eternal fire, ere long,
Will reach it always. See how he shrinks from me!
With death, and chains, and exile in his hand
To scatter o'er his kind as he thinks fit:
They are his weapons, not his armour, for
I have pierced him to the core of his cold heart.
I care not for his frowns! We can but die,
And he but live, for him the very worst
Of destinies: each day secures him more
His tempter's.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

This is mere insanity.

MARINA.

It may be so; and *who* hath made us *mad?*

LOREDANO.

Let her go on; it irks not me.

MARINA.

That's false!
You came here to enjoy a heartless triumph
Of cold looks upon manifold griefs! You came
To be sued to in vain—to mark our tears,
And hoard our groans—to gaze upon the wreck
Which you have made a prince's son—my husband;
In short, to trample on the fallen—an office
The hangman shrinks from, as all men from him!
How have you sped? We are wretched, signor, as

Your plots could make, and vengeance could desire us,
And how *feel you?*

LOREDANO.

As rocks.

MARINA.

By thunder blasted:
They feel not, but no less are shiver'd. Come,
Foscari; now let us go, and leave this felon,
The sole fit habitant of such a cell,
Which he has peopled often, but ne'er fitly
Till he himself shall brood in it alone.

Enter the DOGE.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My father!

DOGE (*embracing him.*)

Jacopo! my son—my son!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My father still! How long it is since I
Have heard thee name my name—*our* name!

DOGE.

My boy!
Couldst thou but know——

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I rarely, sir, have murmur'd.

DOGE.

I feel too much thou hast not.

MARINA.

Doge, look there!
[*She points to* LOREDANO.

DOGE.

I see the man—what mean'st thou?

MARINA.

Caution!

LOREDANO.

Being

The virtue which this noble lady most
May practise, she doth well to recommend it.

MARINA.

Wretch! 'tis no virtue, but the policy
Of those who fain must deal perforce with vice:
As such I recommend it, as I would
To one whose foot was on an adder's path.

DOGE.

Daughter, it is superfluous; I have long
Known Loredano.

LOREDANO.

You may know him better.

MARINA.

Yes; *worse* he could not.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Father, let not these
Our parting hours be lost in listening to
Reproaches, which boot nothing. Is it is it,
Indeed, our last of meetings?

DOGE.

You behold
These white hairs!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And I feel, besides, that mine

Will never be so white. Embrace me, father!
I loved you ever—never more than now.
Look to my children—to your last child's children:
Let them be all to you which he was once,
And never be to you what I am now.
May I not see *them* also?

MARINA.

No—not *here*.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

They might behold their parent any where.

MARINA.

I would that they beheld their father in
A place which would not mingle fear with love,
To freeze their young blood in its natural current.
They have fed well, slept soft, and knew not that
Their sire was a mere hunted outlaw. Well,
I know his fate may one day be their heritage,
But let it only be their *heritage*,
And not their present fee. Their senses, though
Alive to love, are yet awake to terror;
And these vile damps, too, and yon *thick green* wave
Which floats above the place where we now stand—
A cell so far below the water's level,
Sending its pes' nce through every crevice,
Might strike them: *this is not their* atmosphere,
However you—and you—and, most of all,
As worthiest—*you*, sir, noble Loredano!
May breathe it without prejudice.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I had not

Reflected upon this, but acquiesce.
I shall depart, then, without meeting them?

DOGE.

Not so: they shall await you in my chamber.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And must I leave them *all?*

LOREDANO.

You must.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Not one?

LOREDANO.

They are the state's.

MARINA.

I thought they had been mine.

LOREDANO.

They are, in all maternal things.

MARINA.

That is,
In all things painful. If they 're sick, they will
Be left to me to tend them; should they die,
To me to bury and to mourn; but if
They live, they 'll make you soldiers, senators,
Slaves, exiles—what *you* will; or if they are
Females with portions, brides and *bribes* for nobles!
Behold the state's care for its sons and mothers!

LOREDANO.

The hour approaches, and the wind is fair.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

How know you that here, where the genial wind
Ne'er blows in all its blustering freedom?

LOREDANO.

'Twas so
When I came here. The galley floats within
A bow-shot of the "Riva di Schiavoni."

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Father! I pray you to precede me, and
Prepare my children to behold their father.

DOGE.

Be firm, my son!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I will do my endeavour.

MARINA.

Farewell! at least to this detested dungeon,
And him to whose good offices you owe
In part your past imprisonment.

LOREDANO.

And present
Liberation.

DOGE.

He speaks truth.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

No doubt: but 'tis
Exchange of chains for heavier chains I owe him.
He knows this, or he had not sought to change them.
But I reproach not.

LOREDANO.

The time narrows, signor.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Alas! I little thought so lingeringly

To leave abodes like this: but when I feel
That every step I take, even from this cell,
Is one away from Venice, I look back
Even on these dull damp walls, and——

DOGE.

Boy! no tears.

MARINA.

Let them flow on: he wept not on the rack
To shame him, and they cannot shame him now.
They will relieve his heart—that too kind heart—
And I will find an hour to wipe away
Those tears, or add my own. I could weep now,
But would not gratify yon wretch so far.
Let us proceed. Doge, lead the way.

LOREDANO (*to the Familiar*).

The torch, there!

MARINA.

Yes, light us on, as to a funeral pyre,
With Loredano mourning like an heir.

DOGE.

My son, you are feeble; take this hand.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Alas!
Must youth support itself on age, and I
Who ought to be the prop of yours?

LOREDANO.

Take mine.

MARINA.

Touch it not, Foscari; 'twill sting you. Signor,

Stand off! be sure, that if a grasp of yours
Would raise us from the gulf wherein we are plunged,
No hand of ours would stretch itself to meet it.
Come, Foscari, take the hand the altar gave you;
It could not save, but will support you ever.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A Hall in the Ducal Palace.

Enter LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO.

BARBARIGO.

And have you confidence in such a project?

LOREDANO.

I have.

BARBARIGO.

'Tis hard upon his years.

LOREDANO.

Say rather
Kind to relieve him from the cares of state.

BARBARIGO.

'Twill break his heart.

LOREDANO.

Age has no heart to break.
He has seen his son's half broken, and, except
A start of feeling in his dungeon, never
Swerved.

BARBARIGO.

In his countenance, I grant you, never;
But I have seen him sometimes in a calm
So desolate, that the most clamorous grief
Had nought to envy him within. Where is he?

LOREDANO.

In his own portion of the palace, with
His son, and the whole race of Foscaris.

BARBARIGO.

Bidding farewell.

LOREDANO.

A last. As soon he shall
Bid to his dukedom.

BARBARIGO.

When embarks the son?

LOREDANO.

Forthwith—when this long leave is taken. 'Tis
Time to admonish them again.

BARBARIGO.

Forbear;
Retrench not from their moments.

LOREDANO.

Not I, now
We have higher business for our own. This day
Shall be the last of the old Doge's reign,
As the first of his son's last banishment,
And that is vengeance.

BARBARIGO.

In my mind, too deep.

LOREDANO.

'Tis moderate—not even life for life, the rule
Denounced of retribution from all time;
They owe me still my father's and my uncle's.

BARBARIGO.

Did not the Doge deny this strongly?

LOREDANO.

Doubtless.

BARBARIGO.

And did not this shake your suspicion?

LOREDANO.

No.

BARBARIGO.

But if this deposition should take place
By our united influence in the council,
It must be done with all the deference
Due to his years, his station, and his deeds.

LOREDANO.

As much of ceremony as you will,
So that the thing be done. You may, for aught
I care, depute the Council on their knees,
(Like Barbarossa to the Pope), to beg him
To have the courtesy to abdicate.

BARBARIGO.

What; if he will not?

LOREDANO.

We 'll elect another,
And make him null.

BARBARIGO.

But will the laws uphold us?

LOREDANO.

What laws?—"The Ten" are laws; and if they were not,
I will be legislator in this business.

BARBARIGO.

At your own peril?

LOREDANO.

There is none, I tell you,
Our powers are such.

BARBARIGO.

But he has twice already
Solicited permission to retire,
And twice it was refused.

LOREDANO.

The better reason
To grant it the third time.

BARBARIGO.

Unask'd?

LOREDANO.

It shows
The impression of his former instances:
If they were from his heart, he may be thankful;
If not, 'twill punish his hypocrisy.
Come, they are met by this time; let us join them,
And be *thou* fix'd in purpose for this once.
I have prepared such arguments as will not
Fail to move them, and to remove him: since
Their thoughts, their objects, have been sounded, do not
You, with your wonted scruples, teach us pause,
And all will prosper.

BARBARIGO.

Could I but be certain
This is no prelude to such persecution
Of the sire as has fallen upon the son,
I would support you.

LOREDANO.

He is safe, I tell you;
His fourscore years and five may linger on

As long as he can drag them: 'tis his throne
Alone is aim'd at.

BARBARIGO.

But discarded princes
Are seldom long of life.

LOREDANO.

And men of eighty
More seldom still.

BARBARIGO.

And why not wait these few years?

LOREDANO.

Because we have waited long enough, and he
Lived longer than enough. Hence! In to council!

[*Exeunt* LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO.

Enter MEMMO *and a Senator.*

SENATOR.

A summons to "the Ten!" Why so?

MEMMO.

"The Ten"
Alone can answer: they are rarely wont
To let their thoughts anticipate their purpose
By previous proclamation. We are summon'd—
That is enough.

SENATOR.

For them, but not for us;
I would know why.

MEMMO.

You will know why anon,

If you obey, and, if not, you no less
Will know why you should have obey'd.

SENATOR.

I mean not
To oppose them, *but*——

MEMMO.

In Venice "*But*'s" a traitor.
But me no "*buts*," unless you would pass o'er
The Bridge which few repass.

SENATOR.

I am silent.

MEMMO.

Why
Thus hesitate? "The Ten" have call'd in aid
Of their deliberation five and twenty
Patricians of the senate—you are one,
And I another; and it seems to me
Both honour'd by the choice or chance which leads us
To mingle with a body so august.

SENATOR.

Most true. I say no more.

MEMMO.

As we hope, signor,
And all may honestly (that is, all those
Of noble blood may), one day hope to be
Decemvir, it is surely for the senate's
Chosen delegates, a school of wisdom, to
Be thus admitted, though as novices,
To view the mysteries.

SENATOR.

Let us view them: they,
No doubt, are worth it.

MEMMO.

Being worth our lives
If we divulge them, doubtless they are worth
Something, at least to you or me.

SENATOR.

I sought not
A place within the sanctuary; but being
Chosen, however reluctantly so chosen,
I shall fulfil my office.

MEMMO.

Let us not
Be latest in obeying "the Ten's" summons.

SENATOR.

All are not met, but I am of your thought
So far—let 's in.

MEMMO.

The earliest are most welcome
In earnest councils—we will not be least so. [*Exeunt.*

Enter the DOGE, JACOPO FOSCARI, *and* MARINA.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Ah, father! though I must and will depart,
Yet—yet—I pray you to obtain for me
That I once more return unto my home,
Howe'er remote the period. Let there be
A point of time as beacon to my heart,

With any penalty annex'd they please,
But let me still return.

DOGE.

Son Jacopo,
Go and obey our country's will: 'tis not
For us to look beyond.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

But still I must
Look back. I pray you think of me.

DOGE.

Alas!
You ever were my dearest offspring, when
They were more numerous, nor can be less so
Now you are last; but did the state demand
The exile of the disinterred ashes
Of your three goodly brothers, now in earth,
And their desponding shades came flitting round
To impede the act, I must no less obey
A duty, paramount to every duty.

MARINA.

My husband! let us on: this but prolongs
Our sorrow.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

But we are not summon'd yet;
The galley's sails are not unfurl'd:—who knows?
The wind may change.

MARINA.

And if it do, it will not
Change *their* hearts, or your lot: the galley's oars
Will quickly clear the harbour.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Oh, ye elements!
Where are your storms?

MARINA.

In human breasts. Alas!
Will nothing calm you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Never yet did mariner
Put up to patron saint such prayers for prosperous
And pleasant breezes, as I call upon you,
Ye tutelar saints of my own city! which
Ye love not with more holy love than I,
To lash up from the deep the Adrian waves,
And waken Auster, sovereign of the tempest!
Till the sea dash me back on my own shore
A broken corse upon the barren Lido,
Where I may mingle with the sands which skirt
The land I love, and never shall see more!

MARINA.

And wish you this with *me* beside you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

No—
No—not for thee, too good, too kind! May'st thou
Live long to be a mother to those children
Thy fond fidelity for a time deprives
Of such support! But for myself alone,
May all the winds of heaven howl down the Gulf,
And tear the vessel, till the mariners,
Appall'd, turn their despairing eyes on me,
As the Phenicians did on Jonah, then

Cast me out from amongst them, as an offering
To appease the waves. The billow which destroys me
Will be more merciful than man, and bear me,
Dead, but *still bear* me to a native grave,
From fisher's hands upon the desolate strand,
Which, of its thousand wrecks, hath ne'er received
One lacerated like the heart which then
Will be——But wherefore breaks it not? why live I?

MARINA.

To man thyself, I trust, with time, to master
Such useless passion. Until now thou wert
A sufferer, but not a loud one: why
What is this to the things thou hast borne in silence—
Imprisonment and actual torture?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Double,
Triple, and tenfold torture! But you are right,
It must be borne. Father, your blessing.

DOGE.

Would
It could avail thee! but no less thou hast it.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Forgive——

DOGE.

What?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

My poor mother for my birth,
And me for having lived, and you yourself
(As I forgive you), for the gift of life,
Which you bestow'd upon me as my sire.

MARINA.

What hast thou done?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Nothing. I cannot charge
My memory with much save sorrow: but
I have been so beyond the common lot
Chasten'd and visited, I needs must think
That I was wicked. If it be so, may
What I have undergone here keep me from
A like hereafter.

MARINA.

Fear not: *that*'s reserved
For your oppressors.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Let me hope not.

MARINA.

Hope not?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I cannot wish them *all* they have inflicted.

MARINA.

All! the consummate fiends! A thousand fold
May the worm which ne'er dieth feed upon them!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

They may repent.

MARINA.

And if they do, Heaven will not
Accept the tardy penitence of demons.

Enter an Officer and Guards.

OFFICER.

Signor! the boat is at the shore—the wind
Is rising—we are ready to attend you.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

And I to be attended. Once more, father,
Your hand!

DOGE.

Take it. Alas! how thine own trembles!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

No—you mistake; 'tis yours that shakes, my father.
Farewell!

DOGE.

Farewell! Is there aught else?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

No—nothing.
[*To the Officer.*
Lend me your arm, good signor.

OFFICER.

You turn pale—
Let me support you—paler—ho! some aid there!
Some water!

MARINA.

Ah, he is dying!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Now, I 'm ready—
My eyes swim strangely—where 's the door?

MARINA.

Away!

Let me support him—my best love! . Oh, God!
How faintly beats this heart—this pulse!

JACOPO FOSCARI.

The light!
Is it the light?—I am faint.

[*Officer presents him with water.*

OFFICER.

He will be better,
Perhaps, in the air.

JACOPO FOSCARI.

I doubt not. Father—wife—
Your hands!

MARINA.

There 's death in that damp clammy grasp.
Oh God!—My Foscari, how fare you?

JACOPO FOSCARI.

Well!

[*He dies.*

OFFICER.

He 's gone!

DOGE.

He 's free.

MARINA.

No—no, he is not dead;
There must be life yet in that heart—he could not
Thus leave me.

DOGE.

Daughter!

MARINA.

Hold thy peace, old man!

I am no daughter now—thou hast no son.
Oh, Foscari!

OFFICER.

We must remove the body.

MARINA.

Touch it not, dungeon miscreants! your base office
Ends with his life, and goes not beyond murder,
Even by your murderous laws. Leave his remains
To those who know to honour them.

OFFICER.

I must
Inform the signory, and learn their pleasure.

DOGE.

Inform the signory from *me*, the Doge,
They have no further power upon those ashes:
While he lived, he was theirs, as fits a subject—
Now he is *mine*—my broken-hearted boy!

[*Exit Officer.*

MARINA.

And I must live!

DOGE.

Your children live, Marina.

MARINA.

My children! true—they live, and I must live
To bring them up to serve the state, and die
As died their father. Oh! what best of blessings
Were barrenness in Venice! Would my mother
Had been so!

DOGE.

My unhappy children!

MARINA.

What!
You feel it then at last—*you!*—Where is now
The stoic of the state?

DOGE (*throwing himself down by the body*).

Here!

MARINA.

Ay, weep on!
I thought you had no tears—you hoarded them
Until they are useless; but weep on! he never
Shall weep more—never, never more.

Enter LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO.

LOREDANO.

What 's here?

MARINA.

Ah! the devil come to insult the dead! Avaunt!
Incarnate Lucifer! 'tis holy ground.
A martyr's ashes now lie there, which make it
A shrine. Get thee back to thy place of torment!

BARBARIGO.

Lady, we knew not of this sad event,
But pass'd here merely on our path from council.

MARINA.

Pass on.

LOREDANO.

We sought the Doge.

MARINA (*pointing to the* DOGE, *who is still on the ground by his son's body*).

He 's busy, look,

About the business *you* provided for him.
Are ye content?

BARBARIGO.

We will not interrupt
A parent's sorrows.

MARINA.

No, ye only make them,
Then leave them.

DOGE (*rising*).

Sirs, I am ready.

BARBARIGO.

No—not now.

LOREDANO.

Yet 'twas important.

DOGE.

If 'twas so, I can
Only repeat—I am ready.

BARBARIGO.

It shall not be
Just now, though Venice totter'd o'er the deep
Like a frail vessel. I respect your griefs.

DOGE.

I thank you. If the tidings which you bring
Are evil, you may say them; nothing further
Can touch me more than him thou look'st on there:
If they be good, say on; you need not *fear*
That they can *comfort* me.

BARBARIGO.

I would they could!

DOGE.

I spoke not to *you*, but to Loredano.
He understands me.

MARINA.

Ah! I thought it would be so.

DOGE.

What mean you?

MARINA.

Lo! there is the blood beginning
To flow through the dead lips of Foscari—
The body bleeds in presence of the assassin.
[*To* LOREDANO.
Thou cowardly murderer by law, behold
How death itself bears witness to thy deeds!

DOGE.

My child! this is a phantasy of grief.
Bear hence the body. [*To his attendants.*] Signors, if it please you,
Within an hour I 'll hear you.
[*Exeunt* DOGE, MARINA, *and attendants with the body.*
[*Manent* LOREDANO *and* BARBARIGO.

BARBARIGO.

He must not
Be troubled now.

LOREDANO.

He said himself that nought
Could give him trouble farther.

BARBARIGO.

These are words;

But grief is lonely, and the breaking in
Upon it barbarous.

LOREDANO.

Sorrow preys upon
Its solitude, and nothing more diverts it
From its sad visions of the other world
Than calling it at moments back to this.
The busy have no time for tears.

BARBARIGO.

And therefore
You would deprive this old man of all business?

LOREDANO.

The thing 's decreed. The giunta and "the Ten"
Have made it law—who shall oppose that law?

BARBARIGO.

Humanity!

LOREDANO.

Because his son is dead?

BARBARIGO.

And yet unburied.

LOREDANO.

Had we known this when
The act was passing, it might have suspended
Its passage, but impedes it not—once past.

BARBARIGO.

I 'll not consent.

LOREDANO.

You have consented to
All that 's essential—leave the rest to me.

BARBARIGO.

Why press his abdication now?

LOREDANO.

The feelings
Of private passion may not interrupt
The public benefit; and what the state
Decides to-day must not give way before
To-morrow for a natural accident.

BARBARIGO.

You have a son.

LOREDANO.

I *have*—and *had* a father.

BARBARIGO.

Still so inexorable?

LOREDANO.

Still.

BARBARIGO.

But let him
Inter his son before we press upon him
This edict.

LOREDANO.

Let him call up into life
My sire and uncle—I consent. Men may,
Even aged men, be, or appear to be,
Sires of a hundred sons, but cannot kindle
An atom of their ancestors from earth.
The victims are not equal: he has seen
His sons expire by natural deaths, and I
My sires by violent and mysterious maladies.
I used no poison, bribed no subtle master

Of the destructive art of healing, to
Shorten the path to the eternal cure.
His sons, and he had four, are dead, without
My dabbling in vile drugs.

BARBARIGO.

And art thou sure
He dealt in such?

LOREDANO.

Most sure.

BARBARIGO.

And yet he seems
All openness.

LOREDANO.

And so he seem'd not long
Ago to Carmagnuola.

BARBARIGO.

The attainted
And foreign traitor?

LOREDANO.

Even so: when *he*,
After the very night in which "the Ten"
(Join'd with the Doge), decided his destruction,
Met the great Duke at daybreak with a jest,
Demanding whether he should augur him
"The good day or good night?" his Doge-ship answer'd,
"That he in truth had pass'd a night of vigil,
"In which (he added with a gracious smile),
"There often has been question about you*."

* An historical fact.

'Twas true; the question was the death resolved
Of Carmagnuola, eight months ere he died;
And the old Doge, who knew him doom'd, smiled on him
With deadly cozenage, eight long months beforehand—
Eight months of such hypocrisy as is
Learnt but in eighty years. Brave Carmagnuola
Is dead; so are young Foscari and his brethren—
I never *smiled* on *them.*

BARBARIGO.

Was Carmagnuola
Your friend?

LOREDANO.

He was the safeguard of the city.
In early life its foe, but, in his manhood,
Its saviour first, then victim.

BARBARIGO.

Ah! that seems
The penalty of saving cities. He
Whom we now act against not only saved
Our own, but added others to her sway.

LOREDANO.

The Romans (and we ape them) gave a crown
To him who took a city; and they gave
A crown to him who saved a citizen
In battle: the rewards are equal. Now,
If we should measure forth the cities taken
By the Doge Foscari, with citizens
Destroy'd by him, or *through* him, the account
Were fearfully against him, although narrow'd

To private havoc, such as between him
And my dead father.

BARBARIGO.

Are you then thus fix'd?

LOREDANO.

Why, what should change me?

BARBARIGO.

That which changes me:
But you, I know, are marble to retain
A feud. But when all is accomplish'd, when
The old man is deposed, his name degraded,
His sons all dead, his family depress'd,
And you and yours triumphant, shall you sleep?

LOREDANO.

More soundly.

BARBARIGO.

That 's an error, and you 'll find it
Ere you sleep with your fathers.

LOREDANO.

They sleep not
In their accelerated graves, nor will
Till Foscari fills his. Each night I see them
Stalk frowning round my couch, and, pointing towards
The ducal palace, marshal me to vengeance.

BARBARIGO.

Fancy's distemperature! There is no passion
More spectral or fantastical than hate;
Not even its opposite, Love, so peoples air
With phantoms, as this madness of the heart.

Enter an Officer.

LOREDANO.

Where go you, sirrah?

OFFICER.

By the ducal order
To forward the preparatory rites
For the late Foscari's interment.

BARBARIGO.

Their
Vault has been often open'd of late years.

LOREDANO.

'Twill be full soon, and may be closed for ever.

OFFICER.

May I pass on?

LOREDANO.

You may.

BARBARIGO.

How bears the Doge
This last calamity?

OFFICER.

With desperate firmness.
In presence of another he says little,
But I perceive his lips move now and then;
And once or twice I heard him, from the adjoining
Apartment, mutter forth the words—"My son!"
Scarce audibly. I must proceed. [*Exit Officer.*

BARBARIGO.

This stroke
Will move all Venice in his favour.

LOREDANO.

Right!
We must be speedy: let us call together
The delegates appointed to convey
The Council's resolution.

BARBARIGO.

I protest
Against it at this moment.

LOREDANO.

As you please—
I 'll take their voices on it ne'ertheless,
And see whose most may sway them, yours or mine.

[*Exeunt* BARBARIGO *and* LOREDANO.

ACT V. SCENE I.

The DOGE'S *Apartment.*

The DOGE *and Attendants.*

ATTENDANT.

My lord, the deputation is in waiting;
But add, that if another hour would better
Accord with your will, they will make it theirs.

DOGE.

To me all hours are like. Let them approach.

[*Exit Attendant.*

AN OFFICER.

Prince! I have done your bidding.

DOGE.

What command?

OFFICER.

A melancholy one—to call the attendance
Of——

DOGE.

True—true—true: I crave your pardon. I
Begin to fail in apprehension, and
Wax very old—old almost as my years.
Till now I fought them off, but they begin
To overtake me.

Enter the Deputation, consisting of six of the Signory, and the Chief of the Ten.

Noble men, your pleasure!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

In the first place, the Council doth condole
With the Doge on his late and private grief.

DOGE.

No more—no more of that.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Will not the Duke
Accept the homage of respect?

DOGE.

I do
Accept it as 'tis given—proceed.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

"The Ten,"
With a selected giunta from the senate
Of twenty-five of the best born patricians,
Having deliberated on the state
Of the republic, and the o'erwhelming cares
Which, at this moment, doubly must oppress
Your years, so long devoted to your country,
Have judged it fitting, with all reverence,
Now to solicit from your wisdom (which
Upon reflection must accord in this),
The resignation of the ducal ring,
Which you have worn so long and venerably;
And to prove that they are not ungrateful nor
Cold to your years and services, they add

An appanage of twenty hundred golden
Ducats, to make retirement not less splendid
Than should become a sovereign's retreat.

DOGE.

Did I hear rightly?

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Need I say again?

DOGE.

No.—Have you done?

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

I have spoken. Twenty-four
Hours are accorded you to give an answer.

DOGE.

I shall not need so many seconds.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We
Will now retire.

DOGE.

Stay! Four and twenty hours
Will alter nothing which I have to say.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Speak!

DOGE.

When I twice before reiterated
My wish to abdicate, it was refused me;
And not alone refused, but ye exacted
An oath from me that I would never more
Renew this instance. I have sworn to die
In full exertion of the functions, which
My country call'd me here to exercise,

According to my honour and my conscience—
I cannot break *my* oath.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Reduce us not
To the alternative of a decree,
Instead of your compliance.

DOGE.

Providence
Prolongs my days to prove and chasten me;
But ye have no right to reproach my length
Of days, since every hour has been the country's.
I am ready to lay down my life for her,
As I have laid down dearer things than life:
But for my dignity—I hold it of
The *whole* republic; when the *general* will
Is manifest, then you shall all be answer'd.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We grieve for such an answer; but it cannot
Avail you aught.

DOGE.

I can submit to all things,
But nothing will advance; no, not a moment.
What you decree—decree.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

With this, then, must we
Return to those who sent us?

DOGE.

You have heard me.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

With all due reverence we retire.

[*Exeunt the Deputation, &c.*

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT.

My lord,
The noble dame Marina craves an audience.

DOGE.

My time is hers.

Enter MARINA.

MARINA.

My lord, if I intrude—
Perhaps you fain would be alone?

DOGE.

Alone!
Alone, come all the world around me, I
Am now and evermore. But we will bear it.

MARINA.

We will; and for the sake of those who are,
Endeavour——Oh my husband!

DOGE.

Give it way;
I cannot comfort thee.

MARINA.

He might have lived,
So form'd for gentle privacy of life,
So loving, so beloved; the native of
Another land, and who so blest and blessing
As my poor Foscari? Nothing was wanting
Unto his happiness and mine save not
To be Venetian.

DOGE.

Or a prince's son.

MARINA.

Yes; all things which conduce to other men's
Imperfect happiness or high ambition,
By some strange destiny, to him proved deadly.
The country and the people whom he loved,
The prince of whom he was the elder born,
And——

DOGE.

Soon may be a prince no longer.

MARINA.

How?

DOGE.

They have taken my son from me, and now aim
At my too long worn diadem and ring.
Let them resume the gewgaws!

MARINA.

Oh the tyrants!
In such an hour too!

DOGE.

'Tis the fittest time:
An hour ago I should have felt it.

MARINA.

And
Will you not now resent it?—Oh for vengeance!
But he, who, had he been enough protected,
Might have repaid protection in this moment,
Cannot assist his father.

DOGE.

Nor should do so
Against his country, had he a thousand lives
Instead of that——.

MARINA.

They tortured from him. This
May be pure patriotism. I am a woman:
To me my husband and my children were
Country and home. I loved *him*—how I loved him!
I have seen him pass through such an ordeal as
The old martyrs would have shrunk from: he is gone,
And I, who would have given my blood for him,
Have nought to give but tears! But could I compass
The retribution of his wrongs!—Well, well;
I have sons, who shall be men.

DOGE.

Your grief distracts you.

MARINA.

I thought I could have borne it, when I saw him
Bow'd down by such oppression; yes, I thought
That I would rather look upon his corse
Than his prolong'd captivity:—I am punish'd
For that thought now. Would I were in his grave!

DOGE.

I must look on him once more.

MARINA.

Come with me!

DOGE.

Is he——

MARINA.

Our bridal bed is now his bier.

DOGE.

And he is in his shroud?

MARINA.

Come, come, old man!

[*Exeunt the* DOGE *and* MARINA.

Enter BARBARIGO *and* LOREDANO.

BARBARIGO (*to an Attendant*).

Where is the Doge?

ATTENDANT.

This instant retired hence
With the illustrious lady his son's widow.

LOREDANO.

Where?

ATTENDANT.

To the chamber where the body lies.

BARBARIGO.

Let us return, then.

LOREDANO.

You forget, you cannot.
We have the implicit order of the Giunta
To await their coming here, and join them in
Their office: they 'll be here soon after us.

BARBARIGO.

And will they press their answer on the Doge?

LOREDANO.

'Twas his own wish that all should be done promptly.
He answer'd quickly, and must so be answer'd;

His dignity is look'd to, his estate
Cared for—what would he more?

BARBARIGO.

Die in his robes.
He could not have lived long; but I have done
My best to save his honours, and opposed
This proposition to the last, though vainly.
Why would the general vote compel me hither?

LOREDANO.

'Twas fit that some one of such different thoughts
From ours should be a witness, lest false tongues
Should whisper that a harsh majority
Dreaded to have its acts beheld by others.

BARBARIGO.

And not less, I must needs think, for the sake
Of humbling me for my vain opposition.
You are ingenious, Loredano, in
Your modes of vengeance, nay, poetical,
A very Ovid in the art of *hating;*
'Tis thus (although a secondary object,
Yet hate has microscopic eyes), to you
I owe, by way of foil to the more zealous,
This undesired association in
Your Giunta's duties.

LOREDANO.

How!—*my* Giunta!

BARBARIGO.

Yours!
They speak your language, watch your nod, approve
Your plans, and do your work. Are they not *yours?*

LOREDANO.

You talk unwarily. 'Twere best they hear not
This from you.

BARBARIGO.

Oh! they 'll hear as much one day
From louder tongues than mine; they have gone beyond
Even their exorbitance of power: and when
This happens in the most contemn'd and abject
States, stung humanity will rise to check it.

LOREDANO.

You talk but idly.

BARBARIGO.

That remains for proof.
Here come our colleagues.

Enter the Deputation as before.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Is the Duke aware
We seek his presence?

ATTENDANT.

He shall be inform'd.

[*Exit Attendant.*

BARBARIGO.

The Duke is with his son.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

If it be so,
We will remit him till the rites are over.
Let us return. 'Tis time enough to-morrow.

LOREDANO (*aside to* BARBARIGO).

Now the rich man's hell-fire upon your tongue,

Unquench'd, unquenchable! I 'll have it torn
From its vile babbling roots, till you shall utter
Nothing but sobs through blood, for this! Sage signors,
I pray ye be not hasty. [*Aloud to the others.*

BARBARIGO.

But be human!

LOREDANO.

See, the Duke comes!

Enter the DOGE.

DOGE.

I have obey'd your summons.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We come once more to urge our past request.

DOGE.

And I to answer.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

What?

DOGE.

My only answer.

You have heard it.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Hear *you* then the last decree,
Definitive and absolute!

DOGE.

To the point—
To the point! I know of old the forms of office,
And gentle preludes to strong acts—Go on!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

You are no longer Doge; you are released
From your imperial oath as sovereign;
Your ducal robes must be put off; but for
Your services, the state allots the appanage
Already mention'd in our former congress.
Three days are left you to remove from hence,
Under the penalty to see confiscated
All your own private fortune.

DOGE.

That last clause,
I am proud to say, would not enrich the treasury.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Your answer, Duke!

LOREDANO.

Your answer, Francis Foscari!

DOGE.

If I could have foreseen that my old age
Was prejudicial to the state, the chief
Of the republic never would have shown
Himself so far ungrateful, as to place
His own high dignity before his country;
But this *life* having been so many years
Not useless to that country, I would fain
Have consecrated my last moments to her.
But the decree being render'd, I obey.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

If you would have the three days named extended,
We willingly will lengthen them to eight,
As sign of our esteem.

DOGE.

Not eight hours, signor,
Nor even eight minutes.—There 's the ducal ring,
[*Taking off his ring and cap.*
And there the ducal diadem. And so
The Adriatic 's free to wed another.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Yet go not forth so quickly.

DOGE.

I am old, sir,
And even to move but slowly must begin
To move betimes. Methinks I see amongst you
A face I know not—Senator! your name,
You, by your garb, Chief of the Forty!

MEMMO.

Signor,
I am the son of Marco Memmo.

DOGE.

Ah!
Your father was my friend.—But *sons* and *fathers*!—
What, ho! my servants there!

ATTENDANT.

My prince!

DOGE.

No prince—
There are the princes of the prince! [*Pointing to the Ten's Deputation.*]—Prepare
To part from hence upon the instant.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Why
So rashly? 'twill give scandal.

DOGE.

Answer that;

[*To the Ten.*

It is your province.—Sirs, bestir yourselves:

[*To the Servants.*

There is one burthen which I beg you bear
With care, although 'tis past all farther harm—
But I will look to that myself.

BARBARIGO.

He means

The body of his son.

DOGE.

And call Marina,

My daughter!

Enter MARINA.

DOGE.

Get thee ready, we must mourn

Elsewhere.

MARINA.

And every where.

DOGE.

True; but in freedom,

Without these jealous spies upon the great.
Signors, you may depart: what would you more?
We are going: do you fear that we shall bear
The palace with us? Its *old* walls, ten times
As *old* as I am, and I'm very old,
Have served you, so have I, and I and they
Could tell a tale; but I invoke them not

To fall upon you! else they would, as erst
The pillars of stone Dagon's temple on
The Israelite and his Philistine foes.
Such power I do believe there might exist
In such a curse as mine, provoked by such
As you; but I curse not. Adieu, good signors!
May the next duke be better than the present!

LOREDANO.

The *present* duke is Paschal Malipiero.

DOGE.

Not till I pass the threshold of these doors.

LOREDANO.

Saint Mark's great bell is soon about to toll
For his inauguration.

DOGE.

Earth and heaven!
Ye will reverberate this peal; and I
Live to hear this!—the first doge who e'er heard
Such sound for his successor! Happier he,
My attainted predecessor, stern Faliero—
This insult at the least was spared him.

LOREDANO.

What!
Do you regret a traitor?

DOGE.

No—I merely
Envy the dead.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

My lord, if you indeed
Are bent upon this rash abandonment

Of the state's palace, at the least retire
By the private staircase, which conducts you towards
The landing-place of the canal.

DOGE.

No. I
Will now descend the stairs by which I mounted
To sovereignty—the Giant's Stairs, on whose
Broad eminence I was invested duke.
My services have call'd me up those steps,
The malice of my foes will drive me down them.
There five and thirty years ago was I
Install'd, and traversed these same halls from which
I never thought to be divorced except
A corse—a corse, it might be, fighting for them—
But not push'd hence by fellow citizens.
But, come; my son and I will go together—
He to his grave, and I to pray for mine.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

What thus in public?

DOGE.

I was publicly
Elected, and so will I be deposed.
Marina! art thou willing?

MARINA.

Here 's my arm!

DOGE.

And here my *staff*: thus propp'd will I go forth.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

It must not be—the people will perceive it.

DOGE.

The people!—There 's no people, you well know it,
Else you dare not deal thus by them or me.
There is a *populace*, perhaps, whose looks
May shame you; but they dare not groan nor curse you,
Save with their hearts and eyes.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

You speak in passion,
Else——

DOGE.

You have reason. I have spoken much
More than my wont: it is a foible which
Was not of mine, but more excuses you,
Inasmuch as it shows that I approach
A dotage which may justify this deed
Of yours, although the law does not, nor will.
Farewell, sirs!

BARBARIGO.

You shall not depart without
An escort fitting past and present rank.
We will accompany, with due respect,
The Doge unto his private palace. Say!
My brethren, will we not?

DIFFERENT VOICES.

Ay!—Ay!

DOGE.

You shall not
Stir—in my train, at least. I enter'd here
As sovereign—I go out as citizen
By the same portals, but as citizen.

All these vain ceremonies are base insults,
Which only ulcerate the heart the more,
Applying poisons there as antidotes.
Pomp is for princes—I am *none!*—That's false,
I *am*, but only to these gates.—Ah!

LOREDANO.

Hark!

[*The great bell of St. Mark's tolls.*

BARBARIGO.

The bell!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

St. Mark's, which tolls for the election
Of Malipiero.

DOGE.

Well I recognize
The sound! I heard it once, but once before,
And that is five and thirty years ago;
Even *then* I *was not young*.

BARBARIGO.

Sit down, my lord!
You tremble.

DOGE.

'Tis the knell of my poor boy!
My heart aches bitterly.

BARBARIGO.

I pray you sit.

DOGE.

No; my seat here has been a throne till now.
Marina! let us go.

MARINA.

Most readily.

DOGE (*walks a few steps, then stops*).

I feel athirst—will no one bring me here
A cup of water?

BARBARIGO.

I——

MARINA.

And I——

LOREDANO.

And I——

[*The* DOGE *takes a goblet from the hand of* LOREDANO.

DOGE.

I take *yours*, Loredano, from the hand
Most fit for such an hour as this.

LOREDANO.

Why so?

DOGE.

Tis said that our Venetian crystal has
Such pure antipathy to poisons as
To burst, if aught of venom touches it.
You bore this goblet, and it is not broken.

LOREDANO.

Well, sir!

DOGE.

Then it is false, or you are true.
For my own part, I credit neither; 'tis
An idle legend.

MARINA.

You talk wildly, and

Had better now be seated, nor as yet
Depart. Ah! now you look as look'd my husband!

BARBARIGO.

He sinks!—support him!—quick—a chair—support him!

DOGE.

The bell tolls on!—let's hence—my brain's on fire!

BARBARIGO.

I do beseech you, lean upon us!

DOGE.

No!
A sovereign should die standing. My poor boy!
Off with your arms!—*That bell!*
[*The* DOGE *drops down and dies.*

MARINA.

My God! My God!

BARBARIGO (*to* LOREDANO).

Behold! your work's completed!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Is there then
No aid? Call in assistance!

ATTENDANT.

'Tis all over.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

If it be so, at least his obsequies
Shall be such as befits his name and nation,
His rank and his devotion to the duties
Of the realm, while his age permitted him
To do himself and them full justice. Brethren,
Say, shall it not be so?

BARBARIGO.

He has not had
The misery to die a subject where
He reign'd: then let his funeral rites be princely.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We are agreed then?

All, except LOREDANO, *answer*

Yes.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Heaven's peace be with him!

MARINA.

Signors, your pardon: this is mockery.
Juggle no more with that poor remnant, which,
A moment since, while yet it had a soul,
(A soul by whom you have increased your empire,
And made your power as proud as was his glory),
You banish'd from his palace, and tore down
From his high place, with such relentless coldness;
And now, when he can neither know these honours,
Nor would accept them if he could, you, signors,
Purpose, with idle and superfluous pomp,
To make a pageant over what you trampled.
A princely funeral will be your reproach,
And not his honour.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Lady, we revoke not
Our purposes so readily.

MARINA.

I know it,
As far as touches torturing the living.

I thought the dead had been beyond even *you*,
Though (some, no doubt), consign'd to powers which may
Resemble that you exercise on earth.
Leave him to me; you would have done so for
His dregs of life, which you have kindly shorten'd:
It is my last of duties, and may prove
A dreary comfort in my desolation.
Grief is fantastical, and loves the dead,
And the apparel of the grave.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Do you
Pretend still to this office?

MARINA.

I do, signor.
Though his possessions have been all consumed
In the state's service, I have still my dowry,
Which shall be consecrated to his rites,
And those of—— [*She stops with agitation.*

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Best retain it for your children.

MARINA.

Ay, they are fatherless, I thank you.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We
Cannot comply with your request. His relics
Shall be exposed with wonted pomp, and follow'd
Unto their home by the new Doge, not clad
As *Doge*, but simply as a senator.

MARINA.

I have heard of murderers, who have interr'd

Their victims; but ne'er heard, until this hour,
Of so much splendour in hypocrisy
O'er those they slew. I 've heard of widows' tears—
Alas! I have shed some—always thanks to you!
I 've heard of *heirs* in sables—you have left none
To the deceased, so you would act the part
Of such. Well, sirs, your will be done! as one day,
I trust, Heaven's will be done too!

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

Know you, lady,
To whom ye speak, and perils of such speech?

MARINA.

I know the former better than yourselves;
The latter—like yourselves; and can face both.
Wish you more funerals?

BARBARIGO.

Heed not her rash words;
Her circumstances must excuse her bearing.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

We will not note them down.

BARBARIGO (*turning to* LOREDANO, *who is writing upon his tablets*).

What art thou writing,
With such an earnest brow, upon thy tablets?

LOREDANO (*pointing to the* DOGE'S *body*).

That *he* has paid me *!

* "*L'ha pagata.*" An historical fact. See the History of Venice, by P. Daru, page 411, vol. 2d.

CHIEF OF THE TEN.

What debt did he owe you?

LOREDANO.

A long and just one; Nature's debt and *mine*.

[*Curtain falls.*

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

EXTRAIT DE L'HISTOIRE DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DE VENISE PAR P. DARU DE L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE. TOM. II.

Depuis trente ans, la république n'avait pas déposé les armes. Elle avait acquis les provinces de Brescia, de Bergame, de Crême, et la principauté de Ravenne.

Mais ces guerres continuelles faisaient beaucoup de malheureux et de mécontents. Le doge François Foscari, à qui on ne pouvait pardonner d'en avoir été le promoteur, manifesta une seconde fois, en 1442, et probablement avec plus de sincérité que la première, l'intention d'abdiquer sa dignité. Le conseil s'y refusa encore. On avait exigé de lui le serment de ne plus quitter le dogat. Il était déjà avancé dans la vieillesse, conservant cependant beaucoup de force de tête et de caractère, et jouissant de la gloire d'avoir vu la république étendre au loin les limites de ses domaines pendant son administration.

Au milieu de ces prospérités, de grands chagrins vinrent mettre à l'épreuve la fermeté de son ame.

Son fils, Jacques Foscari, fut accusé, en 1445, d'avoir reçu des présents de quelques princes ou seigneurs étrangers, notamment, disait-on, du duc de Milan, Philippe Visconti. C'était non-seulement une bassesse, mais une infraction des lois positives de la république.

Le conseil des dix traita cette affaire comme s'il se fut agi d'un délit commis par un particulier obscur. L'accusé fut amené devant ses juges, devant le doge, qui ne crut pas pouvoir s'abstenir de présider le tribunal. Là, il fut interrogé, appliqué à la question,* déclaré coupable, et il entendit, de la bouche de son père, l'arrêt qui le condamnait à un bannissement perpétuel, et le reléguait à Naples de Romanie, pour y finir ses jours.

Embarqué sur une galère pour se rendre au lieu de son exil, il tomba malade à Trieste. Les sollicitations du doge obtinrent, non sans difficulté, qu'on lui assignât une autre résidence. Enfin le conseil des dix lui permit de se retirer à Trévise, en lui imposant l'obligation d'y rester sous peine de mort, et de se présenter tous les jours devant le gouverneur.

Il y était depuis cinq ans, lorsqu'un des chefs du conseil des dix fut assassiné. Les soupçons se portèrent sur lui : un de ses domestiques qu'on avait vu à Venise fut arrêté et subit la torture. Les bourreaux ne purent lui arracher aucun aveu. Ce terrible tribunal se fit amener le maître, le soumit aux mêmes épreuves ; il résista à tous les tourments, ne cessant d'attester son innocence† ; mais on ne vit dans cette

* E datagli la corda per avere da lui la verità ; chiamato il consiglio de dieci colla giunta, nel quale fù messer lo doge, fù sentenziato (Marin Sanuto Vite de' Duchi, F. Foscari.)

† E'fù tormentato nè mai confessò cosa alcuna, pure parve al consiglio de' dieci di confinarlo in vita alla Canea (Ibid.) Voici le texte du jugement : " Cum Jacobus Foscari per occasionem percussionis et mortis Hermolai Donati fuit retentus et examinatus, et propter significationes, testificationes, et scripturas quæ habentur contra eum, clare apparet ipsum esse reum criminis prædicti, sed propter incantationes et verba quæ sibi reperta sunt, de quibus existit indictia manifesta, videtur propter obstinatam mentem suam, non esse possibile extrahere ab ipso illam veritatem, quæ clara est per scripturas et per testificationes, quoniam in fine aliquam nec vocem, nec gemitum, sed solum intra dentes voces ipse videtur et auditur infra se loqui, etc. . . . Tamen non est standum in istis terminis, propter honorem statûs nostri et pro multis respectibus, præsertim quod regimen nostrum occupatur in hac re et qui inter-

constance que de l'obstination ; de ce qu'il taisait le fait, on conclut que ce fait existait ; on attribua sa fermeté à la magie, et on le relégua à la Canée. De cette terre lointaine, le banni, digne alors de quelque pitié, ne cessait d'écrire à son père, à ses amis, pour obtenir quelque adoucissement à sa déportation. N'obtenant rien et sachant que la terreur qu'inspirait le conseil des dix ne lui permettait pas d'espérer de trouver dans Venise une seule voix qui s'élevât en sa faveur ; il fit une lettre pour le nouveau duc de Milan, par laquelle, au nom des bons offices que Sforce avait reçus du chef de la république, il implorait son intervention en faveur d'un innocent, du fils du doge.

Cette lettre, selon quelques historiens, fut confiée a un marchand, qui avait promis de la faire parvenir au duc ; mais qui, trop averti de ce qu'il avait à craindre en se rendant l'intermédiaire d'une pareille correspondance, se hâta, en débarquant à Venise, de la remettre au chef du tribunal. Une autre version, qui paraît plus sûre, rapporte que la lettre fut surprise par un espion, attaché au pas de l'exilé *.

Ce fut un nouveau délit dont on eut à punir Jacques Foscari. Réclamer la protection d'un prince étranger était un crime, dans un sujet de la république. Une galère partit sur-le-champ pour l'amener dans les prisons de Venise. A son arrivée il fut soumis à l'estrapade †. C'était une singulière destinée, pour le citoyen d'une république et pour le fils d'un prince, d'être trois fois dans sa vie appliqué à la question.

dictum est amplius progredere : vadit pars quod dictus Jacobus Foscari, propter ea quæ habentur de illo, mittatur in confinium in civitate Caneæ, etc. Notice sur le procès de Jacques Foscari dans un volume, intitulé, Raccolta di memorie storiche e annedote, per formar la Storia dell' eccellentissimo consiglio di X della sua prima instituzione sino a' giorni nostri, con le diverse variazioni e riforme nelle varie epoche successe. (Archives de Venise.)

* La notice citée ci-dessus qui rapporte les actes de cette procédure.

† Ebbe prima per sapere la verità trenta squassi di corda. (Marin Sanuto, Vite de' Duchi. F. Foscari.)

Cette fois la torture était d'autant plus odieuse, qu'elle n'avait point d'objet, le fait qu'on avait à lui reprocher, étant incontestable.

Quand on demanda à l'accusé, dans les intervalles que les bourreaux lui accordaient, pourquoi il avait écrit la lettre qu'on lui produisait, il répondit que c'était précisément parce qu'il ne doutait pas qu'elle ne tombât entre les mains du tribunal, que toute autre voie lui avait été fermée pour faire parvenir ses réclamations, qu'il s'attendait bien qu'on le ferait amener à Venise; mais qu'il avait tout risqué pour avoir la consolation de voir sa femme, son père, et sa mère encore une fois.

Sur cette naïve déclaration, on confirma sa sentence d'exil; mais on l'aggrava, en y ajoutant qu'il serait retenu en prison pendant un an. Cette rigueur, dont on usait envers un malheureux, était sans doute odieuse; mais cette politique, qui défendait à tous les citoyens de faire intervenir les étrangers dans les affaires intérieures de la république, était sage. Elle était chez eux une maxime de gouvernement et une maxime inflexible. L'historien Paul Morosini *, a conté que l'empereur Frédéric III, pendant qu'il était l'hôte des Vénitiens, demanda comme une faveur particulière, l'admission d'un citoyen dans le grand conseil, et la grace d'un ancien gouverneur de Candie, gendre du doge et banni pour sa mauvaise administration, sans pouvoir obtenir ni l'une ni l'autre.

Cependant, on ne put refuser au condamné la permission de voir sa femme, ses enfants, ses parents, qu'il allait quitter pour toujours. Cette dernière entrevue même fut accompagnée de cruauté, par la sévère circonspection, qui retenait les épanchements de la douleur paternelle et conjugale. Ce ne fut point dans l'intérieur de leur appartement, ce fut dans

* Historia di Venezia, lib. 23.

une des grandes salles du palais, qu'une femme, accompagnée de ses quatre fils, vint faire les derniers adieux à son mari, qu'un père octogénaire et la dogaresse accablée d'infirmités, jouirent un moment de la triste consolation de mêler leurs larmes à celles de leur exilé. Il se jeta à leurs genoux en leur tendant des mains disloquées par la torture, pour les supplier de solliciter quelque adoucissement à la sentence qui venait d'être prononcée contre lui. Son père eut le courage de lui répondre : " Non, mon fils, respectez votre arrêt, et obéissez sans murmure à la seigneurie*." A ces mots il se sépara de l'infortuné, qui fut sur-le-champ embarqué pour Candie.

L'antiquité vit avec autant d'horreur que d'admiration un père condamnant ses fils évidemment coupables. Elle hésita pour qualifier de vertu sublime ou de férocité cet effort qui paraît au-dessus de la nature humaine†; mais ici, où la première faute n'était qu'une faiblesse, où la seconde n'était pas prouvée, où la troisième n'avait rien de criminel, comment concevoir la constance d'un père, qui voit torturer trois fois son fils unique, qui l'entend condamner sans preuves et qui

* Marin Sanuto, dans sa chronique, Vite de' Duchi, se sert ici sans en avoir eu l'intention d'une expression assez énergique : " Il doge era vecchio in decrepita età e caminava con una mazzetta : E quando gli andò parlogli molto constantemente che parea che non fosse suo figliuolo, licet fosse figliuolo unico, e Jacopo disse, messer padre, vi prego che procuriate per me, acciocchè io torni a casa mia. Il doge disse : Jacopo, va e obbedisci a quello che vuole la terra, e noncercar più oltre."

† Cela fut un acte que l'on ne sçauroit ny suffisamment louer, ny assez blasmer : car, ou c'estoit une excellence de vertu, qui rendoit ainsi son cœur impassible, ou une violence de passion qui le rendoit insensible, dont ne l'une ne l'autre n'est chose petite, ains surpassant l'ordinaire d'humaine nature et tenant où de la divinité ou de la bestialité. Mais il est plus raisonnable que le jugement des hommes s'accorde à sa gloire, que la foiblesse des jugeans fasse des croire sa vertu. Mais pour lors quand il se fut retiré, tout le monde demoura sur la place, comme transy d'horreur et de frayeur, par un long temps sans mot dire, pour avoir veu ce qui avait été fait. (Plutarque, Valerius Publicola.)

n'éclate pas en plaintes ; qui ne l'aborde que pour lui montrer un visage plus austère qu'attendri, et qui, au moment de s'en séparer pour jamais, lui interdit les murmures et jusqu'à l'espérance ? Comment expliquer une si cruelle circonspection, si ce n'est en avouant, à notre honte, que la tyrannie peut obtenir de l'espèce humaine les mêmes efforts que la vertu ? La servitude aurait-elle son héroïsme comme la liberté ?

Quelque temps après ce jugement, on découvrit le véritable auteur de l'assassinat, dont Jacques Foscari portait la peine ; mais il n'était plus temps de réparer cette atroce injustice, le malheureux était mort dans sa prison.

Il me reste à raconter la suite des malheurs du père. L'histoire les attribue à l'impatience qu'avaient ses ennemis et ses rivaux de voir vaquer sa place. Elle accuse formellement Jacques Loredan, l'un des chefs du conseil des dix, de s'être livré contre ce vieillard aux conseils d'une haïne héréditaire, et qui depuis long-temps divisait leurs maisons*.

François Foscari avait essayé de la faire cesser, en offrant sa fille à l'illustre amiral Pierre Loredan, pour un de ses fils. L'alliance avait été rejetée, et l'inimitié des deux familles s'en était accrue. Dans tous les conseils, dans toutes les affaires, le doge trouvait toujours les Loredan prêts à combattre ses propositions ou ses intérêts. Il lui échappa un jour de dire qu'il ne se croirait réellement prince, que lorsque Pierre Loredan aurait cessé de vivre. Cet amiral mourut quelque temps après d'une incommodité assez prompte qu'on ne put expliquer. Il n'en fallut pas davantage aux malveillants pour insinuer que François Foscari, ayant desiré cette mort, pouvait bien l'avoir hâtée.

* Je suis principalement dans ce récit une relation manuscrite de la déposition de François Foscari qui est dans le volume intitulé, Raccolta di memorie storiche e annedote, per formar la Storia dell' eccellentissimo consiglio di X. (Archives de Venise.)

Ces bruits s'accréditèrent encore lorsqu'on vit aussi périr subitement Marc Loredan, frère de Pierre, et cela dans le moment où, en sa qualité d'avogador, il instruisait un procès contre André Donato, gendre du doge, accusé de péculat. On écrivit sur la tombe de l'amiral qu'il avait été enlevé à la patrie par le poison.

Il n'y avait aucune preuve, aucun indice contre François Foscari, aucune raison même de le soupçonner. Quand sa vie entière n'aurait pas démenti une imputation aussi odieuse, il savait que son rang ne lui promettait ni l'impunité ni même l'indulgence. La mort tragique de l'un de ses prédécesseurs l'en avertissait, et il n'avait que trop d'exemples domestiques du soin que le conseil des dix prenait d'humilier le chef de la république.

Cependant, Jacques Loredan, fils de Pierre, croyait ou feignait de croire avoir à venger les pertes de sa famille*. Dans ses livres de comptes (car il faisait le commerce, comme à cette époque presque tous les patriciens,) il avait inscrit de sa propre main le doge au nombre de ses débiteurs, pour la mort, y était-il dit, de mon père et de mon oncle†. De l'autre côté du registre, il avait laissé une page en blanc, pour y faire mention du recouvrement de cette dette, et en effet, après la perte du doge, il écrivit sur son régistre : il me l'a payée, l'ha pagata.

Jacques Loredan fut élu membre du conseil des dix, en devint un des trois chefs, et se promit bien de profiter de cette occasion pour accomplir la vengeance qu'il méditait.

Le doge en sortant de la terrible épreuve qu'il venait de subir, pendant le procès de son fils, s'était retiré au fond de

* Hasce tamen injurias quamvis imaginarias non tam ad animum revocaverat Jacobus Lauredanus defunctorum nepos, quam in abecedarium vindictam opportuna. (Palazzi Fasti Ducales.)

† Ibid. et l'Histoire Vénitienne de Vianolo.

son palais, incapable de se livrer aux affaires, consumé de chagrins, accablé de vieillesse, il ne se montrait plus en public, ni même dans les conseils. Cette retraite, si facile à expliquer dans un vieillard octogénaire si malheureux, déplut aux decemvirs, qui voulurent y voir un murmure contre leur arrêts.

Loredan commença par se plaindre devant ses collègues du tort que les infirmités du doge, son absence des conseils, apportaient à l'expédition des affaires, il finit par hasarder et réussit à faire agréer la proposition de le déposer. Ce n'était pas la première fois que Venise avait pour prince un homme dans la caducité; l'usage et les lois y avaient pourvu; dans ces circonstances le doge était suppléé par le plus ancien du conseil. Ici, cela ne suffisait pas aux ennemis de Foscari. Pour donner plus de solennité à la délibération, le conseil des dix demanda une adjonction de vingt-cinq sénateurs; mais comme on n'en énonçait pas l'objet, et que le grand conseil était loin de le soupçonner, il se trouva que Marc Foscari, frère du doge, leur fut donné pour l'un des adjoints. Au lieu de l'admettre à la délibération, ou de réclamer contre ce choix, on enferma ce sénateur dans une chambre séparée, et on lui fit jurer de ne jamais parler de cette exclusion qu'il éprouvait, en lui déclarant qu'il y allait de sa vie; ce qui n'empêcha pas qu'on n'inscrivît son nom au bas du décret comme s'il y eût pris part*.

Quand on en vint à la délibération, Loredan la provoqua en ces termes †. " Si l'utilité publique doit imposer silence " à tous les intérêts privés, je ne doute pas que nous ne pre- " nions aujourd'hui une mesure que la patrie réclame que

* Il faut cependant remarquer que dans la notice où l'on raconte ce fait, la délibération est rapportée, que les vingt-cinq adjoints y sont nommés, et que le nom de Marc Foscari ne s'y trouve pas.

† Cette harangue se lit dans la notice citée ci-dessus.

" nous lui devons. Les états ne peuvent se maintenir dans
" un ordre de choses immuable : vous n'avez qu'à voir comme
" le nôtre est changé, et combien il le serait davantage s'il
" n'y avait une autorité assez ferme pour y porter remède.
" J'ai honte de vous faire remarquer la confusion qui règne
" dans les conseils, le désordre des délibérations, l'encom-
" brement des affaires, et la légerété avec laquelle les plus im-
" portantes sont décidées ; la licencé de notre jeunesse, le
" peu d'assiduité des magistrats, l'introduction de nouveautés
" dangereuses. Quel est l'effet de ces désordres ? de com-
" promettre notre considération. Quelle en est la cause ?
" l'absence d'un chef capable de modérer les uns, de diriger
" les autres, de donner l'exemple à tous, et de maintenir la
" force des lois.

" Où est le temps où nos décrets étaient aussitôt exécutés
" que rendus ? Où François Carrare se trouvait investi dans
" Padoue, avant de pouvoir être seulement informé que nous
" voulions lui faire la guerre ? nous avons vu tout le con-
" traire dans la dernière guerre contre le duc de Milan. Mal-
" heureuse la république qui est sans chef !

" Je ne vous rappelle pas tous ces inconvénients et leurs
" suites déplorables, pour vous affliger, pour vous effrayer,
" mais pour vous faire souvenir que vous êtes les maîtres, les
" conservateurs de cet état, fondé par vos pères, et de la li-
" berté que nous devons à leurs travaux, à leurs institutions.
" Ici, le mal indique le remède. Nous n'avons point de chef,
" il nous en faut un. Notre prince est notre ouvrage, nous
" avons donc le droit de juger son mérite quand il s'agit de
" l'élire, et son incapacité quand elle se manifeste. J'ajouterai
" que le peuple, encore bien qu'il n'ait pas le droit de pro-
" noncer sur les actions de ses maîtres, apprendra ce change-
" ment avec transport. C'est la providence, je n'en doute
" pas, qui lui inspire elle-même ces dispositions, pour vous

" avertir que la république réclame cette résolution, et que " le sort de l'état est en vos mains."

Ce discours n'éprouva que de timides contradictions ; cependant, la délibération dura huit jours. L'assemblée, ne se jugeant pas aussi sûre de l'approbation universelle que l'orateur voulait le lui faire croire, desirait que le doge donnât lui-même sa démission. Il avait déjà proposée deux fois, et on n'avait pas voulu l'accepter.

Aucune loi ne portait que le prince fut révocable : il était au contraire à vie, et les exemples qu'on pouvait citer de plusieurs doges déposés, prouvaient que de telles révolutions avaient toujours été le résultat d'un mouvement populaire.

Mais d'ailleurs, si le doge pouvait être déposé, ce n'était pas assurement par un tribunal composé d'un petit nombre de membres, institué pour punir les crimes, et nullement investi du droit de révoquer ce que le corps souverain de l'état avait fait.

Cependant, le tribunal arrêta que les six conseillers de la seigneurie, et les chefs du conseil des dix, se transporteraient auprès du doge pour lui signifier, que l'excellentissime conseil avait jugé convenable qu'il abdiquât une dignité, dont son âge ne lui permettait plus de remplir les fonctions. On lui donnait 1500 ducats d'or pour son entretien et vingt-quatre heures pour se décider*.

Foscari répondit sur-le-champ avec beaucoup de gravité, que deux fois il avait voulu se démettre de sa charge ; qu'au lieu de le lui permettre, on avait exigé de lui le serment de ne plus réitérer cette demande ; que la providence avait prolongé ses jours pour l'éprouver et pour l'affliger, que cependant on n'était pas en droit de reprocher sa longue vie à un homme qui avait employé quatre-vingt-quatre ans au service de la république ; qu'il était prêt encore à lui sacri-

* Ce Décret est rapporté textuellement dans la notice.

fier sa vie; mais que, pour sa dignité, il la tenait de la république entière, et qu'il se réservait de répondre sur ce sujet, quand la volonté générale se serait légalement manifestée.

Le lendemain, à l'heure indiquée, les conseillers et les chefs des dix se présentèrent. Il ne voulut pas leur donner d'autre réponse. Le conseil s'assembla sur-le-champ, lui envoya demander encore une fois sa résolution, séance tenante, et, la réponse ayant été la même, on prononça que le doge était relevé de son serment et déposé de sa dignité, on lui assignait une pension de 1500 ducats d'or, en lui enjoignant de sortir du palais dans huit jours, sous peine de voir tous ses biens confisqués *.

Le lendemain, ce décret fut porté au doge, et ce fut Jacques Loredan qui eut la cruelle joie de le lui présenter. Il répondit: "Si j'avais pu prévoir que ma vieillesse fut "préjudiciable à l'état, le chef de la république ne se serait "pas montré assez ingrat, pour préférer sa dignité à la "patrie; mais cette vie lui ayant été utile pendant tant "d'années, je voulais lui en consacrer jusqu'au dernier mo- "ment. Le décret est rendu, je m'y conformerai." Après avoir parlé ainsi, il se dépouilla des marques de sa dignité, remit l'anneau ducal qui fut brisé en sa présence, et dès le jour suivant il quitta ce palais, qu'il avait habité pendant trente-cinq ans, accompagné de son frère, de ses parents, et de ses amis. Un secrétaire, qui se trouva sur le perron, l'invita à descendre par un escalier dérobé, afin d'éviter la foule du peuple, qui s'était rassemblé dans les cours, mais il s'y refusa, disant qu'il voulait descendre par où il était monté; et quand il fut au bas de l'escalier des géants, il se retourna, appuyé sur sa béquille, vers le palais en proférant ces paroles: "Mes services m'y avaient appellé, la malice de "mes ennemis m'en fait sortir."

* La notice rapporte aussi ce décret.

La foule qui s'ouvrait sur son passage, et qui avait peut-être desiré sa mort, était émue de respect et d'attendrissement*. Rentré dans sa maison, il recommanda à sa famille d'oublier les injures de ses ennemis. Personne dans les divers corps de l'état ne se crut en droit de s'étonner, qu'un prince inamovible eût été déposé sans qu'on lui reprochât rien; que l'état eût perdu son chef, à l'insu du sénat et du corps souverain lui-même. Le peuple seul laissa échapper quelques regrets; une proclamation du conseil des dix prescrivit le silence le plus absolu sur cette affaire, sous peine de mort.

Avant de donner un successeur à François Foscari, une nouvelle loi fut rendue, qui défendait au doge d'ouvrir et de lire, autrement qu'en présence de ses conseillers, les dépêches des ambassadeurs de la république, et les lettres des princes étrangers†.

Les électeurs entrèrent au conclave et nommèrent au dogat Paschal Malipier le 30 Octobre, 1457. La cloche de Saint-Marc, qui annonçait à Vénise son nouveau prince, vint frapper l'oreille de François Foscari; cette fois sa fermeté l'abandonna, il éprouva un tel saisissement, qu'il mourut le lendemain‡.

La république arrêta qu'on lui rendrait les mêmes honneurs funèbres que s'il fut mort dans l'exercice de sa dignité; mais lorsqu'on se présenta pour enlever ses restes, sa veuve, qui de son nom était Marine Nani, déclara qu'elle ne le souffrirait point; qu'on ne devait pas traiter en prince après sa mort celui que vivant on avait dépouillé de la couronne, et que, puisqu'il avait consumé ses biens au service de l'état, elle saurait consacrer sa dot à lui faire rendre les derniers honneurs ||. On ne tint aucun compte de cette résistance,

* On lit dans la notice ces propres mots: "Se fosse stato in loro potere volontieri lo avrebbero restituito."

† Hist. di Venetia, di Paolo Morosini, lib. 24.

‡ Hist. di Pietro Justiniani, lib. 8.

|| Hist. d'Egnatio, liv. 6. cap. 7.

et malgré les protestations de l'ancienne dogaresse, le corps fut enlevé, revêtu des ornements ducaux, exposé en public, et les obsèques furent célébrées avec la pompe accoutumée. Le nouveau doge assista au convoi en robe de sénateur.

La pitié qu'avait inspirée le malheur de ce vieillard, ne fut pas tout-à-fait stérile. Un an après, on osa dire que le conseil de dix avait outrepassé ses pouvoirs, et il lui fut défendu par une loi du grand conseil de s'ingérer à l'avenir de juger le prince, à moins que ce ne fut pour cause de félonie*.

Un acte d'autorité tel que la déposition d'un doge inamovible de sa nature, aurait pu exciter un soulèvement général, ou au moins occasionner une division dans une république autrement constituée que Venise. Mais depuis trois ans, il existait dans celle-ci une magistrature, ou plutôt une autorité, devant laquelle tout devait se taire.

EXTRAIT DE L'HISTOIRE DES REPUBLIQUES ITALIENNES DU MOYEN ÂGE. PAR J. C. L. SIMONDE DE SISMONDI. TOM. X.

Le Doge de Venise, qui avait prévenu par ce traité une guerre non moins dangereuse que celle qu'il avait terminée presque en même temps par le traité de Lodi, était alors parvenu à une extrême vieillesse. François Foscari occupait cette première dignité de l'état dès le 15 Avril, 1423. Quoiqu'il fut déjà âgé de plus de cinquante-un ans à l'époque de son élection, il était cependant le plus jeune des quarante-un électeurs. Il avait eu beaucoup de peine à parvenir au rang qu'il convoitait, et son élection avait été conduite avec beau-

* Ce décret est du 25 Octobre, 1458. La notice le rapporte.

coup d'adresse. Pendant plusieurs tours de scrutin ses amis les plus zélés s'étaient abstenus de lui donner leur suffrage, pour que les autres ne le considérassent pas comme un concurrent redoutable*. Le conseil des dix craignait son crédit parmi la noblesse pauvre, parce qu'il avait cherché à se la rendre favorable, tandis qu'il était procurateur de Saint-Marc, en faisant employer plus de trente mille ducats à doter des jeunes filles de bonne maison, ou à établir de jeunes gentilshommes. On craignoit encore sa nombreuse famille, car alors il était père de quatre enfans, et marié de nouveau; enfin on redoutait son ambition et son goût pour la guerre. L'opinion que ses adversaires s'étaient formée de lui fut vérifiée par les événemens; pendant trente-quatre ans que Foscari fut à la tête de la république, elle ne cessa point de combattre. Si les hostilités étaient suspendues durant quelques mois, c'était pour recommencer bientôt avec plus de vigueur. Ce fut l'époque où Venise étendit son empire sur Brescia, Bergame, Ravenne, et Crême; où elle fonda sa domination de Lombardie, et parut sans cesse sur le point d'asservir toute cette province. Profond, courageux, inébranlable, Foscari communiqua aux conseils son propre caractère, et ses talens lui firent obtenir plus d'influence sur la république, que n'avaient exercé la plupart de ses prédécesseurs. Mais si son ambition avait eu pour but l'agrandissement de sa famille, elle fut cruellement trompée: trois de ses fils moururent dans les huit années qui suivirent son election; le quatrième, Jacob, par lequel la maison Foscari s'est perpétuée, fut victime de la jalousie du conseil des dix, et empoisonna par ses malheurs les jours de son père †.

En effet, le conseil des dix, redoublant de défiance envers

* Marin Sanuto, Vite de' Duchi di Venezia, p. 967.
† Ibid. p. 968.

le chef de l'état, lorsqu'il le voyoit plus fort par ses talens et sa popularité, veilloit sans cesse sur Foscari, pour le punir de son crédit et de sa gloire. Au mois de Février 1445, Michel Bevilacqua, Florentin, exilé à Venise, accusa en secret Jacques Foscari auprès des inquisiteurs d'état, d'avoir reçu de duc Philippe Visconti, des présens d'argent et de joyaux, pars les mains des gens de sa maison. Telle était l'odieuse procédure adoptée à Venise, que sur cette accusation secrète, le fils du doge, du representant de la majesté de la république, fut mis à la torture. On lui arracha par l'estrapade l'aveu des charges portées contre lui; il fut relégué pour le reste de ses jours à Napoli de Romanie, avec obligation de se présenter chaque matin au commandant de la place *. Cependant, le vaisseau qui le portait ayant touché à Trieste, Jacob, grièvement malade des suites de la torture, et plus encore de l'humiliation qu'il avait éprouvée, demanda en grâce au conseil des dix de n'être pas envoyé plus loin. Il obtint cette faveur, par une délibération du 28 Décembre, 1446; il fut rappelé à Trévise, et il eut la liberté d'habiter tout le Trévisan indifféremment †.

Il vivait en paix à Trévise; et la fille de Léonard Contarini, qu'il avait épousée le 10 Février, 1441, était venue le joindre dans son exil, lorsque le 5 Novembre, 1450, Almoro Donato, chef du conseil des dix, fut assassiné. Les deux autres inquisiteurs d'état, Triadano Gritti et Antonio Venieri, portèrent leurs soupçons sur Jacob Foscari, parcequ'un domestique à lui, nommé Olivier, avait été vu ce soir-là même à Venise, et avait des premiers donné la nouvelle de cet assassinat. Olivier fut mis à la torture, mais il nia jusqu'à la fin, avec un courage inébranlable, le crime dont on l'accusait, quoique ses juges eussent la barbarie de lui

* Marin Sanuto, p. 968.
† Ibid, Vite, p. 1123.

faire donner jusqu'à quatre-vingts tours d'estrapade. Cependant, comme Jacob Foscari avait de puissans motifs d'inimitié contre le conseil des dix qui l'avait condamné, et qui témoignait de la haïne au doge son père, on essaya de mettre à son tour Jacob à la torture, et l'on prolongea contre lui ces affreux tourmens, sans réussir à en tirer aucune confession. Malgré sa dénégation, le conseil des dix le condamna à être transporté à la Canée, et accorda une récompense à son délateur. Mais les horribles douleurs que Jacob Foscari avait éprouvées, avaient troublé sa raison, ses persécuteurs, touchés de ce dernier malheur, permirent qu'on le ramenât à Venise le 26 Mai, 1451. Il embrassa son père, il puisa dans ses exhortations quelque courage et quelque calme, et il fut reconduit immédiatement à la Canée*. Sur ces entrefaites, Nicolas Erizzo, homme déjà noté pour un précédent crime, confessa, en mourant, que c'était lui qui avait tué Almoro Donato†.

Le malheureux doge, François Foscari, avait déjà cherché à plusieurs reprises, à abdiquer une dignité si funeste à lui-même et à sa famille. Il lui semblait que, redescendu au rang de simple citoyen, comme il n'inspirerait plus de crainte ou de jalousie, on n'accablerait plus son fils par ces effroyables persécutions. Abattu par la mort de ses premiers enfans, il avait voulu, dès le 26 Juin, 1433, déposer une dignité, durant l'exercice de laquelle sa patrie avait été tourmentée par la guerre, par la peste, et par des malheurs de tout genre‡. Il renouvela cette proposition après les jugemens rendus contre son fils; mais le conseil des dix le retenait forcément sur le trône, comme il retenait son fils dans les fers.

* Marin Sanuto, p. 1138.—M. Ant. Sabellico. Deca III. L. VI. f. 187.
† Ibid. p. 1139.
‡ Ibid. p. 1032.

En vain Jacob Foscari, obligé de se présenter chaque jour au gouverneur de la Canée, réclamait contre l'injustice de sa dernière sentence, sur laquelle la confession d'Erizzo ne laissait plus de doutes. En vain il demandait grâce au farouche conseil des dix; il ne pouvait obtenir aucune réponse. Le désir de revoir son père et sa mère, arrivés tous deux au dernier terme de la vieillesse, le désir de revoir une patrie dont la cruauté ne méritait pas un si tendre amour, se changèrent en lui en une vraie fureur. Ne pouvant retourner à Venise pour y vivre libre, il voulut du moins y aller chercher un supplice. Il écrivit au duc de Milan à la fin de Mai, 1456, pour implorer sa protection auprès du sénat: et sachant qu'une telle lettre seroit considérée comme un crime, il l'exposa lui-même dans un lieu où il était sûr qu'elle seroit saisie par les espions qui l'entouraient. En effet, la lettre étant déférée au conseil des dix, on l'envoya chercher aussitôt, et il fut reconduit à Venise le 19 Juillet, 1456*.

Jacob Foscari ne nia point sa lettre, il raconta en même temps dans quel but il l'avait écrite, et comment il l'avait fait tomber entre les mains de son délateur. Malgré ces aveux, Foscari fut remis à la torture, et on lui donna trente tours d'estrapade, pour voir s'il confirmerait ensuite ses dépositions. Quand on le détacha de la corde, on le trouva déchiré par ces horribles secousses. Les juges permirent alors à son père, à sa mère, à sa femme, et à ses fils, d'aller le voir dans sa prison. Le vieux Foscari, appuyé sur un bâton, ne se traîna qu'avec peine, dans la chambre où son fils unique était pansé de ses blessures. Ce fils demandait encore la grâce de mourir dans sa maison.—" Retourne à " ton exil, mon fils, puisque ta patrie l'ordonne," lui dit le

* Marin Sanuto, p. 1162.

doge, " et souméts-toi à sa volonté." Mais en rentrant dans son palais, ce malheureux vieillard s'évanouit, épuisé par la violence qu'il s'était faite. Jacob devait encore passer une année en prison à la Canée, avant qu'on lui rendît la même liberté limitée à laquelle il était réduit avant cet événement; mais à peine fut il débarqué sur cette terre d'exil, qu'il y mourut de douleur*.

Dès-lors, et pendant quinze mois, le vieux doge, accablé d'années et de chagrins, ne recouvra plus la force de son corps ou celle de son âme; il n'assistait plus à aucun des conseils, et il ne pouvait plus remplir aucune des fonctions de sa dignité. Il était entré dans sa quatre-vingt-sixième année, et si le conseil des dix avait été susceptible de quelque pitié, il aurait attendu en silence la fin, sans doute prochaîne, d'une carrière marquée par tant de gloire et tant de malheurs. Mais le chef du conseil des dix était alors Jacques Loredano, fils de Marc, et neveu de Pierre, le grand amiral, qui toute leur vie avaient été les ennemis acharnés du vieux doge. Ils avaient transmis leur haïne à leurs enfans, et cette vieille rancune n'était pas encore satisfaite†. A l'instigation de Loredano, Jérome Barbarigo, inquisiteur d'état, proposa au conseil des dix, au mois d'Octobre 1457, de sommettre Foscari à une nouvelle humiliation. Dès que ce magistrat ne pouvait plus remplir ses fonctions, Barbarigo demanda qu'on nommât un autre doge. Le conseil, qui avait refusé par deux fois l'abdication de Foscari, parce que la constitution ne pouvait la permettre, hésita avant de se mettre en contradiction avec ses propres décrets. Les discussions dans le conseil et la junte, se prolongèrent pendant huit jours, jusque fort avant dans le nuit. Cependant, on fit entrer dans l'assemblée Marco Foscari, procurateur

* Marin Sanuto, p 1163.—Navagiero Stor. Venez. p. 1118.

† Vettor Sandi Storia civile Veneziana, P. II. L. VIII. p. 715.—717.

de Saint-Marc, et frère du doge, pour qu'il fût lié par le redoutable serment du secret, et qu'il ne pût arrêter les menées de ses ennemis. Enfin, le conseil se rendit auprès du doge, et lui demanda d'abdiquer volontairement un emploi qu'il ne pouvait plus exercer. " J'ai juré," répondit le vieillard, " de remplir jusqu'à ma mort, selon mon honneur et " ma conscience, les fonctions auxquelles ma patrie m'a " appelé. Je ne puis me délir moi-même de mon serment; " qu'un ordre des conseils dispose de moi, je m'y soumettrai, " mais je ne le devancerai pas." Alors une nouvelle délibération du conseil délia François Foscari de son serment ducal, lui assura une pension de deux mille ducats pour le reste de sa vie, et lui ordonna d'évacuer en trois jours le palais, et de déposer les ornemens de sa dignité. Le doge ayant remarqué parmi les conseillers qui lui portèrent cet ordre, un chef de la quarantie qu'il ne connoissait pas, demanda son nom : " Je suis le fils de Marco Memmo," lui dit le conseiller.—" Ah! ton père était mon ami," lui dit le vieux doge, en soupirant. Il donna aussitôt des ordres pour qu'on transportât ses effets dans une maison a lui; et le lendemain 23 Octobre on le vit, se soutenat à peine, et appuyé sur son vieux frère, redescendre ces mêmes escaliers sur lesquels, trente-quatre ans auparavant, on l'avait vu installé avec tant de pompe, et traverser ces mêmes salles où la république avait reçu ses sermens. Le peuple entier parut indigné de tant de dureté exercée contre un vieillard qu'il respectait et qu'il aimait; mais le conseil des dix fit publier une défense de parler de cette révolution, sous peine d'être traduit devant les inquisiteurs d'état. Le 20 Octobre, Pasqual Malipieri, procurateur de Saint-Marc, fut élu pour successeur de Foscari; celui-ci n'eut pas néanmoins l'humiliation de vivre sujet, là où il avait régné. En entendant le son des cloches, qui sonnaient en actions de

grâces pour cette élection, il mourut subitement d'une hémorragie causée par une veine qui s'éclata dans sa poitrine*.

"Le doge, blessé de trouver constamment un contradicteur et un censeur si amer dans son frère, lui dit un jour en plein conseil; 'Messire Augustin, vous faites tout votre possible pour hâter ma mort; vous vous flattez de me succéder; mais, si les autres vous connaissent aussi bien qui je vous connais, ils n'auront garde de vous elire.' Là dessus il se leva, ému de colère, rentra dans son appartement, et mourut quelques jours après. Ce frère, contre lequel il s'était emporté, fut precisement le successeur qu'on lui donna. C'était un merite dont on aimait à tenir compte; surtout à un parent, de s'être mis en opposition avec le chef de la république †." *Daru, Histoire de Venise,* vol. ii. sec. xi. p. 533.

* Marin Sanuto, Vite de' Duchi di Venezia, p. 1164.—Chronicon Eugubinum, T. XXI, p. 992.—Christoforo da Soldo Istoria Bresciana, T. XXI, p. 891.—Navigero Storio Veneziana, T. XXIII, p. 1120.—M. A. Sabellico. Deca III, L. VIII. f. 201.

† The Venetians appear to have had a particular turn for breaking the hearts of their Doges: the above is another instance of the kind in the Doge Marco Barbarigo; he was succeeded by his brother Agostino Barbarigo, whose chief merit is above-mentioned.

In Lady Morgan's fearless and excellent work upon "Italy," I perceive the expression of "Rome of the Ocean" applied to Venice. The same phrase occurs in the "Two Foscari." My publisher can vouch for me that the tragedy was written and sent to England some time before I had seen Lady Morgan's work, which I only received on the 16th of August. I hasten, however, to notice the coincidence, and to yield the originality of the phrase to her who first placed it before the public. I am the more anxious to do this as I am informed (for I have seen but few of the specimens, and those accidentally) that there have been lately brought against me charges of plagiarism. I have also had an anonymous sort of threatening intimation of the same kind, apparently with the intent of extorting money. To such charges I have no answer to make. One of them is ludicrous enough. I am reproached for having formed the description of a shipwreck in verse from the narratives of many *actual* shipwrecks in *prose*, selecting such materials as were most striking. Gibbon makes it a merit in Tasso "to have copied the minutest details of the Siege of Jerusalem from the Chronicles." In *me* it may be a demerit, I presume; let it remain so. Whilst I have been occupied in defending *Pope*'s character, the lower orders of Grub-street appear to have been assailing *mine:* this is as it should be, both in them and in me. One of the accusations in the nameless epistle alluded to is still more laughable: it states seriously that I "received five hundred "pounds for writing advertisements for Day and Martin's "patent blacking!" This is the highest compliment to my literary powers which I ever received. It states also "that a

" person has been trying to make acquaintance with Mr. " Townsend, a gentleman of the law, who was with me on " business in Venice three years ago, for the purpose of ob- " taining any defamatory particulars of my life from this " occasional visitor." Mr. Townsend is welcome to say what he knows. I mention these particulars merely to show the world in general what the *literary* lower world contains, and their way of setting to work. Another charge made, I am told, in the " Literary Gazette" is, that I wrote the notes to " Queen Mab;" a work which I never saw till some time after its publication, and which I recollect showing to Mr. Sotheby as a poem of great power and imagination. I never wrote a line of the notes, nor ever saw them except in their published form. No one knows better than their real author, that his opinions and mine differ materially upon the metaphysical portion of that work; though in common with all who are not blinded by baseness and bigotry, I highly admire the poetry of that and his other publications.

Mr. Southey, too, in his pious preface to a poem whose blasphemy is as harmless as the sedition of Wat Tyler, because it is equally absurd with that sincere production, calls upon the " legislature to look to it," as the toleration of such writings led to the French Revolution: *not* such writings as Wat Tyler, but as those of the " Satanic School." This is not true, and Mr. Southey knows it to be not true. Every French writer of any freedom was persecuted; Voltaire and Rousseau were exiles, Marmontel and Diderot were sent to the Bastille, and a perpetual war was waged with the whole class by the existing despotism. In the next place, the French Revolution was *not* occasioned by any writings whatsoever, but must have occurred had no such writers ever existed. It is the fashion to attribute every thing to the

French revolution, and the French revolution to every thing but its real cause. That cause is obvious—the government exacted too much, and the people could neither *give* nor *bear more*. Without this, the Encyclopedists might have written their fingers off without the occurrence of a single alteration. And the *English* revolution—(the first, I mean)—what was it occasioned by? The *puritans* were surely as pious and moral as Wesley or his biographer? Acts—acts on the part of government, and *not* writings against them, have caused the past convulsions, and are tending to the future.

I look upon such as inevitable, though no revolutionist: I wish to see the English constitution restored and not destroyed. Born an aristocrat, and naturally one by temper, with the greater part of my present property in the funds, what have *I* to gain by a revolution? Perhaps I have more to lose in every way than Mr. Southey, with all his places and presents for panegyrics and abuse into the bargain. But that a revolution is inevitable, I repeat. The government may exult over the repression of petty tumults; these are but the receding waves repulsed and broken for a moment on the shore, while the great tide is still rolling on and gaining ground with every breaker. Mr. Southey accuses us of attacking the religion of the country; and is he abetting it by writing lives of *Wesley*? One mode of worship is merely destroyed by another. There never was, nor ever will be, a country without a religion. We shall be told of *France* again: but it was only Paris and a frantic party, which for a moment upheld their dogmatic nonsense of theo-philanthropy. The church of England, if overthrown, will be swept away by the sectarians and not by the sceptics. People are too wise, too well informed, too certain of their own immense importance in the realms of space, ever to submit to the impiety of doubt. There may be a few

such diffident speculators, like water in the pale sunbeam of human reason, but they are very few; and their opinions, without enthusiasm or appeal to the passions, can never gain proselytes—unless, indeed, they are persecuted—*that*, to be sure, will increase any thing.

Mr. S., with a cowardly ferocity, exults over the anticipated "death-bed repentance" of the objects of his dislike; and indulges himself in a pleasant "Vision of Judgment," in prose as well as verse, full of impious impudence. What Mr. S.'s sensations or ours may be in the awful moment of leaving this state of existence neither he nor we can pretend to decide. In common, I presume, with most men of any reflection, *I* have not waited for a "death-bed" to repent of many of my actions, notwithstanding the "diabolical pride" which this pitiful renegado in his rancour would impute to those who scorn *him*. Whether upon the whole the good or evil of my deeds may preponderate is not for me to ascertain; but, as my means and opportunities have been greater, I shall limit my present defence to an assertion (easily proved, if necessary,) that I, "in my degree," have done more real good in any one given year, since I was twenty, than Mr. Southey in the whole course of his shifting and turncoat existence. There are several actions to which I can look back with an honest pride, not to be damped by the calumnies of a hireling. There are others to which I recur with sorrow and repentance; but the only *act* of *my* life of which Mr. Southey can have any real knowledge, as it was one which brought me in contact with a near connexion of his own, did no dishonour to that connexion nor to me.

I am not ignorant of Mr. Southey's calumnies on a different occasion, knowing them to be such, which he scattered abroad on his return from Switzerland against me and others: they have done him no good in this world; and, if his creed

be the right one, they will do him less in the next. What *his* "death-bed" may be, it is not my province to predicate: let him settle it with his Maker, as I must do with mine. There is something at once ludicrous and blasphemous in this arrogant scribbler of all works sitting down to deal damnation and destruction upon his fellow creatures, with Wat Tyler, the Apotheosis of George the Third, and the Elegy on Martin the regicide, all shuffled together in his writing desk. One of his consolations appears to be a Latin note from a work of a Mr. Landor, the author of "Gebir," whose friendship for Robert Southey will, it seems, "be an honour to him when the ephemeral disputes and ephemeral reputations of the day are forgotten." I for one neither envy him "the friendship," nor the glory in reversion which is to accrue from it, like Mr. Thelusson's fortune in the third and fourth generation. This friendship will probably be as memorable as his own epics, which (as I quoted to him ten or twelve years ago in "English Bards") Porson said "would be remembered when Homer and Virgil are forgotten, and not till then." For the present, I leave him.

C A I N,

A MYSTERY.

"Now the Serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."—*Gen.* iii. 1.

TO

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

THIS MYSTERY OF CAIN

IS INSCRIBED,

BY HIS OBLIGED FRIEND,

AND FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following scenes are entitled "a Mystery," in conformity with the ancient title annexed to dramas upon similar subjects, which were styled "Mysteries, or Moralities." The author has by no means taken the same liberties with his subject which were common formerly, as may be seen by any reader curious enough to refer to those very profane productions, whether in English, French, Italian, or Spanish. The author has endeavoured to preserve the language adapted to his characters; and where it is (and this is but rarely) taken from actual *Scripture*, he has made as little alteration, even of words, as the rhythm would permit. The reader will recollect that the book of Genesis does not state that Eve was tempted by a demon, but by "the Serpent;" and that only because he was "the most subtil of all the beasts of the field." Whatever interpretation the Rabbins and the Fathers may have put

upon this, I must take the words as I find them, and reply with Bishop Watson upon similar occasions, when the Fathers were quoted to him, as Moderator in the Schools of Cambridge, "Behold the Book!"—holding up the Scripture. It is to be recollected that my present subject has nothing to do with the *New Testament*, to which no reference can be here made without anachronism. With the poems upon similar topics I have not been recently familiar. Since I was twenty, I have never read Milton; but I had read him so frequently before, that this may make little difference. Gesner's "Death of Abel" I have never read since I was eight years of age, at Aberdeen. The general impression of my recollection is delight; but of the contents I remember only that Cain's wife was called Mahala, and Abel's Thirza.—In the following pages I have called them "Adah" and "Zillah," the earliest female names which occur in Genesis; they were those of Lamech's wives: those of Cain and Abel are not called by their names. Whether, then, a coincidence of subject may have caused the same in expression, I know nothing, and care as little.

The reader will please to bear in mind (what few choose to recollect) that there is no allusion

to a future state in any of the books of Moses, nor indeed in the Old Testament. For a reason for this extraordinary omission he may consult "Warburton's Divine Legation;" whether satisfactory or not, no better has yet been assigned. I have therefore supposed it new to Cain, without, I hope, any perversion of Holy Writ.

With regard to the language of Lucifer, it was difficult for me to make him talk like a Clergyman upon the same subjects; but I have done what I could to restrain him within the bounds of spiritual politeness.

If he disclaims having tempted Eve in the shape of the Serpent, it is only because the book of Genesis has not the most distant allusion to any thing of the kind, but merely to the Serpent in his serpentine capacity.

Note.—The reader will perceive that the author has partly adopted in this poem the notion of Cuvier, that the world had been destroyed several times before the creation of man. This speculation, derived from the different strata and the bones of enormous and unknown animals found in them, is not contrary to the Mosaic account, but rather confirms it; as no human bones have

yet been discovered in those strata, although those of many known animals are found near the remains of the unknown. The assertion of Lucifer, that the pre-adamite world was also peopled by rational beings much more intelligent than man, and proportionably powerful to the mammoth, &c. &c. is, of course, a poetical fiction to help him to make out his case.

I ought to add, that there is a "Tramelogedie" of Alfieri, called "Abel."—I have never read that nor any other of the posthumous works of the writer, except his Life.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

Adam.
Cain.
Abel.

SPIRITS.

Angel of the Lord.
Lucifer.

WOMEN.

Eve.
Adah.
Zillah.

CAIN.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Land without Paradise.—Time, Sunrise.

ADAM, EVE, CAIN, ABEL, ADAH, ZILLAH, *offering a Sacrifice.*

ADAM.

GOD, the Eternal! Infinite! All-Wise!—
Who out of darkness on the deep didst make
Light on the waters with a word—all hail!
Jehovah, with returning light, all hail!

EVE.

God! who didst name the day, and separate
Morning from night, till then divided never—
Who didst divide the wave from wave, and call
Part of thy work the firmament—all hail!

ABEL.

God! who didst call the elements into
Earth—ocean—air—and fire, and with the day
And night, and worlds which these illuminate

Or shadow, madest beings to enjoy them,
And love both them and thee—all hail! all hail!

ADAH.

God, the Eternal! Parent of all things!
Who didst create these best and beauteous beings,
To be beloved, more than all, save thee—
Let me love thee and them:—All hail! all hail!

ZILLAH.

Oh, God! who loving, making, blessing all,
Yet didst permit the serpent to creep in,
And drive my father forth from Paradise,
Keep us from further evil:—Hail! all hail!

ADAM.

Son Cain, my first-born, wherefore art thou silent?

CAIN.

Why should I speak?

ADAM.

To pray.

CAIN.

Have ye not pray'd?

ADAM.

We have, most fervently.

CAIN.

And loudly: I
Have heard you.

ADAM.

So will God, I trust.

ABEL.

Amen!

ADAM.

But thou, my eldest-born, art silent still.

CAIN.

'Tis better I should be so.

ADAM.

Wherefore so?

CAIN.

I have nought to ask.

ADAM.

Nor aught to thank for?

CAIN.

No.

ADAM.

Dost thou not live?

CAIN.

Must I not die?

EVE.

Alas!

The fruit of our forbidden tree begins
To fall.

ADAM.

And we must gather it again.
Oh, God! why didst thou plant the tree of knowledge?

CAIN.

And wherefore pluck'd ye not the tree of life?
Ye might have then defied him.

ADAM.

Oh! my son,
Blaspheme not: these are serpents' words.

CAIN.

Why not?
The snake spoke *truth:* it *was* the tree of knowledge;
It *was* the tree of life:—knowledge is good,
And life is good; and how can both be evil?

EVE.

My boy! thou speakest as I spoke in sin,
Before thy birth: let me not see renew'd
My misery in thine. I have repented.
Let me not see my offspring fall into
The snares beyond the walls of Paradise,
Which e'en in Paradise destroy'd his parents.
Content thee with what *is.* Had we been so,
Thou now hadst been contented.—Oh, my son!

ADAM.

Our orisons completed, let us hence,
Each to his task of toil—not heavy, though
Needful: the earth is young, and yields us kindly
Her fruits with little labour.

EVE.

Cain, my son,
Behold thy father cheerful and resign'd,
And do as he doth.

[*Exit* ADAM *and* EVE.

ZILLAH.

Wilt thou not, my brother?

ABEL.

Why wilt thou wear this gloom upon thy brow,
Which can avail thee nothing, save to rouse
The Eternal anger?

ADAH.

My beloved Cain,
Wilt thou frown even on me?

CAIN.

No, Adah! no;
I fain would be alone a little while.
Abel, I'm sick at heart; but it will pass:
Precede me, brother—I will follow shortly.
And you, too, sisters, tarry not behind;
Your gentleness must not be harshly met:
I'll follow you anon.

ADAH.

If not, I will
Return to seek you here.

ABEL.

The peace of God
Be on your spirit, brother!

[*Exit* ABEL, ZILLAH, *and* ADAH.

CAIN (*solus.*)

And this is
Life!—Toil! and wherefore should I toil?—because
My father could not keep his place in Eden.
What had *I* done in this?—I was unborn,
I sought not to be born; nor love the state
To which that birth has brought me. Why did he
Yield to the serpent and the woman? or,
Yielding, why suffer? What was there in this?
The tree was planted, and why not for him?
If not, why place him near it, where it grew,
The fairest in the centre? They have but

One answer to all questions, "'twas *his* will,
And *he* is good." How know I that? Because
He is all-powerful must all-good, too, follow?
I judge but by the fruits—and they are bitter—
Which I must feed on for a fault not mine.
Whom have we here?—A shape like to the angels,
Yet of a sterner and a sadder aspect
Of spiritual essence: why do I quake?
Why should I fear him more than other spirits,
Whom I see daily wave their fiery swords
Before the gates round which I linger oft,
In twilight's hour, to catch a glimpse of those
Gardens which are my just inheritance,
Ere the night closes o'er the inhibited walls
And the immortal trees which overtop
The cherubim-defended battlements?
If I shrink not from these, the fire-arm'd angels,
Why should I quail from him who now approaches?
Yet he seems mightier far than them, nor less
Beauteous, and yet not all as beautiful
As he hath been, and might be: sorrow seems
Half of his immortality. And is it
So? and can aught grieve save humanity?
He cometh.

Enter LUCIFER.

LUCIFER.

Mortal!

CAIN.

Spirit, who art thou?

LUCIFER.

Master of spirits.

CAIN.

And being so, canst thou
Leave them, and walk with dust?

LUCIFER.

I know the thoughts
Of dust, and feel for it, and with you.

CAIN.

How!
You know my thoughts?

LUCIFER.

They are the thoughts of all
Worthy of thought;—'tis your immortal part
Which speaks within you.

CAIN.

What immortal part?
This has not been reveal'd: the tree of life
Was withheld from us by my father's folly,
While that of knowledge, by my mother's haste,
Was pluck'd too soon; and all the fruit is death!

LUCIFER.

They have deceived thee; thou shalt live.

CAIN.

I live,
But live to die: and, living, see no thing
To make death hateful, save an innate clinging,
A loathsome and yet all invincible
Instinct of life, which I abhor, as I

Despise myself, yet cannot overcome—
And so I live. Would I had never lived!

LUCIFER.

Thou livest, and must live for ever: think not
The earth, which is thine outward cov'ring, is
Existence—it will cease, and thou wilt be
No less than thou art now.

CAIN.

No *less*! and why
No more?

LUCIFER.

It may be thou shalt be as we.

CAIN.

And ye?

LUCIFER.

Are everlasting.

CAIN.

Are ye happy?

LUCIFER.

We are mighty.

CAIN.

Are ye happy?

LUCIFER.

No: art thou?

CAIN.

How should I be so? Look on me!

LUCIFER.

Poor clay!
And thou pretendest to be wretched! Thou!

CAIN.

I am:—and thou, with all thy might, what art thou?

LUCIFER.

One who aspired to be what made thee, and
Would not have made thee what thou art.

CAIN.

Ah!
Thou look'st almost a god; and——

LUCIFER.

I am none:
And having fail'd to be one, would be nought
Save what I am. He conquer'd; let him reign!

CAIN.

Who?

LUCIFER.

Thy sire's Maker, and the earth's.

CAIN.

And heaven's,
And all that in them is. So I have heard
His seraphs sing; and so my father saith.

LUCIFER.

They say—what they must sing and say, on pain
Of being that which I am—and thou art—
Of spirits and of men.

CAIN.

And what is that?

LUCIFER.

Souls who dare use their immortality—
Souls who dare look the Omnipotent tyrant in

His everlasting face, and tell him, that
His evil is not good! If he has made,
As he saith—which I know not, nor believe—
But, if he made us—he cannot unmake:
We are immortal!—nay, he'd *have* us so,
That he may torture:—let him! He is great—
But, in his greatness, is no happier than
We in our conflict! Goodness would not make
Evil; and what else hath he made? But let him
Sit on his vast and solitary throne,
Creating worlds, to make eternity
Less burthensome to his immense existence
And unparticipated solitude!
Let him crowd orb on orb: he is alone
Indefinite, indissoluble tyrant!
Could he but crush himself, 'twere the best boon
He ever granted: but let him reign on,
And multiply himself in misery!
Spirits and men, at least we sympathise;
And, suffering in concert, make our pangs,
Innumerable, more endurable,
By the unbounded sympathy of all—
With all! But *He!* so wretched in his height,
So restless in his wretchedness, must still
Create, and re-create———

CAIN.

Thou speak'st to me of things which long have swum
In visions through my thought: I never could
Reconcile what I saw with what I heard.

My father and my mother talk to me
Of serpents, and of fruits and trees: I see
The gates of what they call their Paradise
Guarded by fiery-sworded cherubim,
Which shut them out, and me: I feel the weight
Of daily toil, and constant thought: I look
Around a world where I seem nothing, with
Thoughts which arise within me, as if they
Could master all things:—but I thought alone
This misery was *mine*.—My father is
Tamed down; my mother has forgot the mind
Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk
Of an eternal curse; my brother is
A watching shepherd boy, who offers up
The firstlings of the flock to him who bids
The earth yield nothing to us without sweat;
My sister Zillah sings an earlier hymn
Than the birds' matins; and my Adah, my
Own and beloved, she too understands not
The mind which overwhelms me: never till
Now met I aught to sympathise with me.
'Tis well—I rather would consort with spirits.

LUCIFER.

And hadst thou not been fit by thine own soul
For such companionship, I would not now
Have stood before thee as I am: a serpent
Had been enough to charm ye, as before.

CAIN.

Ah! didst *thou* tempt my mother?

LUCIFER.

I tempt none,
Save with the truth: was not the tree, the tree
Of knowledge? and was not the tree of life
Still fruitful? Did *I* bid her pluck them not?
Did *I* plant things prohibited within
The reach of beings innocent, and curious
By their own innocence? I would have made ye
Gods; and even He who thrust ye forth, so thrust ye
Because "ye should not eat the fruits of life,
"And become gods as we." Were those his words?

CAIN.

They were, as I have heard from those who heard them,
In thunder.

LUCIFER.

Then who was the demon? He
Who would not let ye live, or he who would
Have made ye live for ever in the joy
And power of knowledge?

CAIN.

Would they had snatch'd both
The fruits, or neither!

LUCIFER.

One is yours already,
The other may be still.

CAIN.

How so?

LUCIFER.

By being
Yourselves, in your resistance. Nothing can

Quench the mind, if the mind will be itself
And centre of surrounding things—'tis made
To sway.

CAIN.

But didst thou tempt my parents?

LUCIFER.

I?
Poor clay! what should I tempt them for, or how?

CAIN.

They say the serpent was a spirit.

LUCIFER.

Who
Saith that? It is not written so on high:
The proud One will not so far falsify,
Though man's vast fears and little vanity
Would make him cast upon the spiritual nature
His own low failing. The snake was the snake—
No more; and yet not less than those he tempted,
In nature being earth also—*more* in *wisdom*,
Since he could overcome them, and foreknew
The knowledge fatal to their narrow joys.
Think'st thou I'd take the shape of things that die?

CAIN.

But the thing had a demon?

LUCIFER.

He but woke one
In those he spake to with his forky tongue.
I tell thee that the serpent was no more
Than a mere serpent: ask the cherubim
Who guard the tempting tree. When thousand ages

Have roll'd o'er your dead ashes, and your seed's,
The seed of the then world may thus array
Their earliest fault in fable, and attribute
To me a shape I scorn, as I scorn all
That bows to him, who made things but to bend
Before his sullen, sole eternity;
But we, who see the truth, must speak it. Thy
Fond parents listen'd to a creeping thing,
And fell. For what should spirits tempt them? What
Was there to envy in the narrow bounds
Of Paradise, that spirits who pervade
Space——but I speak to thee of what thou know'st not,
With all thy tree of knowledge.

CAIN.

But thou canst not
Speak aught of knowledge which I would not know,
And do not thirst to know, and bear a mind
To know.

LUCIFER.

And heart to look on?

CAIN.

Be it proved.

LUCIFER.

Dar'st thou to look on Death?

CAIN.

He has not yet
Been seen.

LUCIFER.

But must be undergone.

CAIN.

My father

Says he is something dreadful, and my mother
Weeps when he's named; and Abel lifts his eyes
To heaven, and Zillah casts hers to the earth,
And sighs a prayer; and Adah looks on me,
And speaks not.

LUCIFER.

And thou?

CAIN.

Thoughts unspeakable

Crowd in my breast to burning, when I hear
Of this almighty Death, who is, it seems,
Inevitable. Could I wrestle with him?
I wrestled with the lion, when a boy,
In play, till he ran roaring from my gripe.

LUCIFER.

It has no shape; but will absorb all things
That bear the form of earth-born being.

CAIN.

Ah!

I thought it was a being: who could do
Such evil things to beings save a being?

LUCIFER.

Ask the Destroyer.

CAIN.

Who?

LUCIFER.

The Maker—call him

Which name thou wilt; he makes but to destroy.

CAIN.

I knew not that, yet thought it, since I heard
Of death: although I know not what it is,
Yet it seems horrible. I have look'd out
In the vast desolate night in search of him;
And when I saw gigantic shadows in
The umbrage of the walls of Eden, chequer'd
By the far-flashing of the cherubs' swords,
I watch'd for what I thought his coming; for
With fear rose longing in my heart to know
What 'twas which shook us all—but nothing came.
And then I turn'd my weary eyes from off
Our native and forbidden Paradise,
Up to the lights above us, in the azure,
Which are so beautiful: shall they, too, die?

LUCIFER.

Perhaps—but long outlive both thine and thee.

CAIN.

I 'm glad of that; I would not have them die,
They are so lovely. What is death? I fear,
I feel, it is a dreadful thing; but what,
I cannot compass: 'tis denounced against us,
Both them who sinn'd and sinn'd not, as an ill—
What ill?

LUCIFER.

To be resolved into the earth.

CAIN.

But shall I know it?

LUCIFER.

As I know not death,
I cannot answer.

CAIN.

Were I quiet earth,
That were no evil: would I ne'er had been
Aught else but dust!

LUCIFER.

That is a grov'ling wish,
Less than thy father's, for he wish'd to know.

CAIN.

But not to live, or wherefore pluck'd he not
The life-tree?

LUCIFER.

He was hinder'd.

CAIN.

Deadly error!
Not to snatch first that fruit:—but ere he pluck'd
The knowledge, he was ignorant of death.
Alas! I scarcely now know what it is,
And yet I fear it—fear I know not what!

LUCIFER.

And I, who know all things, fear nothing: see
What is true knowledge.

CAIN.

Wilt thou teach me all?

LUCIFER.

Ay, upon one condition.

CAIN.

Name it.

LUCIFER.

That
Thou dost fall down and worship me—thy Lord.

CAIN.

Thou art not the Lord my father worships.

LUCIFER.

No.

CAIN.

His equal?

LUCIFER.

No;—I have nought in common with him!
Nor would: I would be aught above—beneath—
Aught save a sharer or a servant of
His power. I dwell apart; but I am great:—
Many there are who worship me, and more
Who shall—be thou amongst the first.

CAIN.

I never
As yet have bow'd unto my father's God,
Although my brother Abel oft implores
That I would join with him in sacrifice:—
Why should I bow to thee?

LUCIFER.

Hast thou ne'er bow'd
To him?

CAIN.

Have I not said it?—need I say it?
Could not thy mighty knowledge teach thee that?

LUCIFER.

He who bows not to him has bow'd to me!

CAIN.

But I will bend to neither.

LUCIFER.

Ne'er the less,

Thou art my worshipper: not worshipping
Him makes thee mine the same.

CAIN.

And what is that?

LUCIFER.

Thou 'lt know here—and hereafter.

CAIN.

Let me but
Be taught the mystery of my being.

LUCIFER.

Follow
Where I will lead thee.

CAIN.

But I must retire
To till the earth—for I had promised——

LUCIFER.

What?

CAIN.

To cull some first fruits.

LUCIFER.

Why?

CAIN.

To offer up
With Abel on an altar.

LUCIFER.

Saidst thou not
Thou ne'er hadst bent to him who made thee?

CAIN.

Yes—
But Abel's earnest prayer has wrought upon me;
The offering is more his than mine—and Adah——

LUCIFER.

Why dost thou hesitate?

CAIN.

She is my sister,
Born on the same day, of the same womb; and
She wrung from me, with tears, this promise; and
Rather than see her weep, I would, methinks,
Bear all—and worship aught.

LUCIFER.

Then follow me!

CAIN.

I will.

Enter ADAH.

ADAH.

My brother, I have come for thee;
It is our hour of rest and joy—and we
Have less without thee. Thou hast labour'd not
This morn; but I have done thy task: the fruits
Are ripe, and glowing as the light which ripens:
Come away.

CAIN.

See'st thou not?

ADAH.

I see an angel;
We have seen many: will he share our hour
Of rest?—he is welcome.

CAIN.

But he is not like
The angels we have seen.

ADAH.

Are there, then, others?

But he is welcome, as they were: they deign'd
To be our guests—will he?

CAIN (*To Lucifer.*)

Wilt thou?

LUCIFER.

I ask
Thee to be mine.

CAIN.

I must away with him.

ADAH.

And leave us?

CAIN.

Ay.

ADAH.

And *me?*

CAIN.

Beloved Adah!

ADAH.

Let me go with thee.

LUCIFER.

No, she must not.

ADAH.

Who
Art thou that steppest between heart and heart?

CAIN.

He is a god.

ADAH.

How know'st thou?

CAIN.

He speaks like
A god.

ADAH.

So did the serpent, and it lied.

LUCIFER.

Thou errest, Adah!—was not the tree that
Of knowledge?

ADAH.

Ay—to our eternal sorrow.

LUCIFER.

And yet that grief is knowledge— so he lied not:
And if he did betray you, 'twas with truth;
And truth in its own essence cannot be
But good.

ADAH.

But all we know of it has gather'd
Evil on ill: expulsion from our home,
And dread, and toil, and sweat, and heaviness;
Remorse of that which was—and hope of that
Which cometh not. Cain! walk not with this spirit.
Bear with what we have borne, and love me—I
Love thee.

LUCIFER.

More than thy mother and thy sire?

ADAH.

I do. Is that a sin, too?

LUCIFER.

No, not yet;
It one day will be in your children.

ADAH.

What!
Must not my daughter love her brother Enoch?

LUCIFER.

Not as thou lovest Cain?

ADAH.

Oh, my God!
Shall they not love and bring forth things that love
Out of their love? have they not drawn their milk
Out of this bosom? was not he, their father,
Born of the same sole womb, in the same hour
With me? did we not love each other? and
In multiplying our being multiply
Things which will love each other as we love
Them?—And as I love thee, my Cain! go not
Forth with this spirit; he is not of ours.

LUCIFER.

The sin I speak of is not of my making,
And cannot be a sin in you—whate'er
It seem in those who will replace ye in
Mortality.

ADAH.

What is the sin which is not
Sin in itself? Can circumstance make sin
Or virtue?—if it doth, we are the slaves
Of——

LUCIFER.

Higher things than ye are slaves: and higher
Than them or ye would be so, did they not
Prefer an independency of torture
To the smooth agonies of adulation
In hymns and harpings, and self-seeking prayers
To that which is omnipotent, because

It is omnipotent, and not from love,
But terror and self-hope.

ADAH.

Omnipotence
Must be all goodness.

LUCIFER.

Was it so in Eden?

ADAH.

Fiend! tempt me not with beauty; thou art fairer
Than was the serpent, and as false.

LUCIFER.

As true.
Ask Eve, your mother; bears she not the knowledge
Of good and evil?

ADAH.

Oh, my mother! thou
Hast pluck'd a fruit more fatal to thine offspring
Than to thyself; thou at the least hast past
Thy youth in Paradise, in innocent
And happy intercourse with happy spirits;
But we, thy children, ignorant of Eden,
Are girt about by demons, who assume
The words of God, and tempt us with our own
Dissatisfied and curious thoughts—as thou
Wert work'd on by the snake, in thy most flush'd
And heedless, harmlesss wantonness of bliss.
I cannot answer this immortal thing
Which stands before me; I cannot abhor him;
I look upon him with a pleasing fear,
And yet I fly not from him: in his eye

There is a fastening attraction which
Fixes my fluttering eyes on his; my heart
Beats quick; he awes me, and yet draws me near,
Nearer, and nearer: Cain—Cain—save me from him!

CAIN.

What dreads my Adah? This is no ill spirit.

ADAH.

He is not God—nor God's: I have beheld
The cherubs and the seraphs; he looks not
Like them.

CAIN.

But there are spirits loftier still—
The archangels.

LUCIFER.

And still loftier than the archangels.

ADAH.

Ay—but not blessed.

LUCIFER.

If the blessedness
Consists in slavery—no.

ADAH.

I have heard it said,
The seraphs *love most*—cherubim *know most*—
And this should be a cherub—since he loves not.

LUCIFER.

And if the higher knowledge quenches love,
What must *he be* you cannot love when known?
Since the all-knowing cherubim love least,
The seraphs' love can be but ignorance:
That they are not compatible, the doom
Of thy fond parents, for their daring, proves

Choose betwixt love and knowledge—since there is
No other choice: your sire hath chosen already;
His worship is but fear.

ADAH.

Oh, Cain! choose love.

CAIN.

For thee, my Adah, I choose not—it was
Born with me—but I love nought else.

ADAH.

Our parents?

CAIN.

Did they love us when they snatch'd from the tree
That which hath driven us all from Paradise?

ADAH.

We were not born then—and if we had been,
Should we not love them and our children, Cain?

CAIN.

My little Enoch! and his lisping sister!
Could I but deem them happy, I would half
Forget——but it can never be forgotten
Through thrice a thousand generations! never
Shall men love the remembrance of the man
Who sow'd the seed of evil and mankind
In the same hour! They pluck'd the tree of science
And sin—and, not content with their own sorrow,
Begot *me*—*thee*—and all the few that are,
And all the unnumber'd and innumerable
Multitudes, millions, myriads, which may be,
To inherit agonies accumulated
By ages!—And *I* must be sire of such things!
Thy beauty and thy love—my love and joy,

The rapturous moment and the placid hour,
All we love in our children and each other,
But lead them and ourselves through many years
Of sin and pain—or few, but still of sorrow,
Intercheck'd with an instant of brief pleasure,
To Death—the unknown! Methinks the tree of knowledge
Hath not fulfill'd its promise:—if they sinn'd,
At least they ought to have known all things that are
Of knowledge—and the mystery of death.
What do they know?—that they are miserable.
What need of snakes and fruits to teach us that?

ADAH.

I am not wretched, Cain, and if thou
Wert happy——

CAIN.

Be thou happy then alone—
I will have nought to do with happiness,
Which humbles me and mine.

ADAH.

Alone I could not,
Nor *would* be happy: but with those around us,
I think I could be so, despite of death,
Which, as I know it not, I dread not, though
It seems an awful shadow—if I may
Judge from what I have heard.

LUCIFER.

And thou couldst not
Alone, thou say'st, be happy?

ADAH.

Alone! Oh, my God!

Who could be happy and alone, or good?
To me my solitude seems sin; unless
When I think how soon I shall see my brother,
His brother, and our children, and our parents.

LUCIFER.

Yet thy God is alone; and is he happy?
Lonely and good?

ADAH.

He is not so; he hath
The angels and the mortals to make happy,
And thus becomes so in diffusing joy:
What else can joy be but the spreading joy?

LUCIFER.

Ask of your sire, the exile fresh from Eden;
Or of his first-born son; ask your own heart;
It is not tranquil.

ADAH.

Alas! no; and you—
Are you of heaven?

LUCIFER.

If I am not, inquire
The cause of this all-spreading happiness
(Which you proclaim) of the all-great and good
Maker of life and living things; it is
His secret, and he keeps it. We must bear,
And some of us resist, and both in vain,
His seraphs say; but it is worth the trial,
Since better may not be without: there is
A wisdom in the spirit, which directs
To right, as in the dim blue air the eye

Of you, young mortals, lights at once upon
The star which watches, welcoming the morn.

ADAH.

It is a beautiful star; I love it for
Its beauty.

LUCIFER.

And why not adore?

ADAH.

Our father
Adores the Invisible only.

LUCIFER.

But the symbols
Of the Invisible are the loveliest
Of what is visible; and yon bright star
Is leader of the host of heaven.

ADAH.

Our father
Saith that he has beheld the God himself
Who made him and our mother.

LUCIFER.

Hast *thou* seen him?

ADAH.

Yes—in his works.

LUCIFER.

But in his being?

ADAH.

No—
Save in my father, who is God's own image;
Or in his angels, who are like to thee—
And brighter, yet less beautiful and powerful

In seeming: as the silent sunny noon,
All light they look upon us; but thou seem'st
Like an ethereal night, where long white clouds
Streak the deep purple, and unnumber'd stars
Spangle the wonderful mysterious vault
With things that look as if they would be suns;
So beautiful, unnumber'd, and endearing,
Not dazzling, and yet drawing us to them,
They fill my eyes with tears, and so dost thou.
Thou seem'st unhappy; do not make us so,
And I will weep for thee.

LUCIFER.

Alas! those tears!
Couldst thou but know what oceans will be shed——

ADAH.

By me?

LUCIFER.

By all.

ADAH.

What all?

LUCIFER.

The million millions—
Thy myriad myriads—the all-peopled earth—
The unpeopled earth—and the o'er-peopled Hell,
Of which thy bosom is the germ.

ADAH.

Oh Cain!
This spirit curseth us.

CAIN.

Let him say on;
Him will I follow.

ADAH.

Whither?

LUCIFER.

To a place
Whence he shall come back to thee in an hour;
But in that hour see things of many days.

ADAH.

How can that be?

LUCIFER.

Did not your Maker make
Out of old worlds this new one in few days?
And cannot I, who aided in this work,
Show in an hour what he hath made in many,
Or hath destroy'd in few?

CAIN.

Lead on.

ADAH.

Will he
In sooth return within an hour?

LUCIFER.

He shall.
With us acts are exempt from time, and we
Can crowd eternity into an hour,
Or stretch an hour into eternity:
We breathe not by a mortal measurement—
But that 's a mystery. Cain, come on with me.

ADAH.

Will he return?

LUCIFER.

Ay, woman! he alone
Of mortals from that place (the first and last

Who shall return, save ONE)—shall come back to thee
To make that silent and expectant world
As populous as this: at present there
Are few inhabitants.

ADAH.

Where dwellest thou?

LUCIFER.

Throughout all space. Where should I dwell? Where are
Thy God or Gods—there am I: all things are
Divided with me; life and death—and time—
Eternity—and heaven and earth—and that
Which is not heaven nor earth, but peopled with
Those who once peopled or shall people both—
These are my realms! So that I do divide
His, and possess a kingdom which is not
His. If I were not that which I have said,
Could I stand here? His angels are within
Your vision.

ADAH.

So they were when the fair serpent
Spoke with our mother first.

LUCIFER.

Cain! thou hast heard.
If thou dost long for knowledge, I can satiate
That thirst; nor ask thee to partake of fruits
Which shall deprive thee of a single good
The conqueror has left thee. Follow me.

CAIN.

Spirit, I have said it. [*Exeunt* LUCIFER *and* CAIN.

ADAH *(follows, exclaiming)*

Cain! my brother! Cain!

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Abyss of Space.

CAIN.

I tread on air, and sink not; yet I fear
To sink.

LUCIFER.

Have faith in me, and thou shalt be
Borne on the air, of which I am the prince.

CAIN.

Can I do so without impiety?

LUCIFER.

Believe—and sink not! doubt—and perish! thus
Would run the edict of the other God,
Who names me demon to his angels; they
Echo the sound to miserable things,
Which knowing nought beyond their shallow senses,
Worship the word which strikes their ear, and deem
Evil or good what is proclaim'd to them
In their abasement. I will have none such:
Worship or worship not, thou shalt behold

The worlds beyond thy little world, nor be
Amerced, for doubts beyond thy little life,
With torture of *my* dooming. There will come
An hour, when toss'd upon some water-drops,
A man shall say to a man, "Believe in me,
And walk the waters;" and the man shall walk
The billows and be safe. *I* will not say
Believe in *me*, as a conditional creed
To save thee; but fly with me o'er the gulf
Of space an equal flight, and I will show
What thou dar'st not deny, the history
Of past, and present, and of future worlds.

CAIN.

Oh, god, or demon, or whate'er thou art,
Is yon our earth?

LUCIFER.

Dost thou not recognize
The dust which form'd your father?

CAIN.

Can it be?
Yon small blue circle, swinging in far ether,
With an inferior circlet near it still,
Which looks like that which lit our earthly night?
Is this our Paradise? Where are its walls,
And they who guard them?

LUCIFER.

Point me out the site
Of Paradise.

CAIN.

How should I? As we move

Like sunbeams onward, it grows small and smaller,
And as it waxes little, and then less,
Gathers a halo round it, like the light
Which shone the roundest of the stars, when I
Beheld them from the skirts of Paradise:
Methinks they both, as we recede from them,
Appear to join the innumerable stars
Which are around us; and, as we move on,
Increase their myriads.

LUCIFER.

And if there should be
Worlds greater than thine own, inhabited
By greater things, and they themselves far more
In number than the dust of thy dull earth,
Though multiplied to animated atoms,
All living, and all doom'd to death, and wretched,
What wouldst thou think?

CAIN.

I should be proud of thought
Which knew such things.

LUCIFER.

But if that high thought were
Link'd to a servile mass of matter, and,
Knowing such things, aspiring to such things,
And science still beyond them, were chain'd down
To the most gross and petty paltry wants,
All foul and fulsome, and the very best
Of thine enjoyments a sweet degradation,
A most enervating and filthy cheat
To lure thee on to the renewal of

Fresh souls and bodies, all foredoom'd to be
As frail, and few so happy——

CAIN.

Spirit! I
Know nought of death, save as a dreadful thing
Of which I have heard my parents speak, as of
A hideous heritage I owe to them
No less than life; a heritage not happy,
If I may judge till now. But, spirit! if
It be, as thou hast said (and I within
Feel the prophetic torture of its truth),
Here let me die: for to give birth to those
Who can but suffer many years, and die,
Methinks is merely propagating death,
And multiplying murder.

LUCIFER.

Thou canst not
All die—there is what must survive.

CAIN.

The Other
Spake not of this unto my father, when
He shut him forth from Paradise, with death
Written upon his forehead. But at least
Let what is mortal of me perish, that
I may be in the rest as angels are.

LUCIFER.

I am angelic: wouldst thou be as I am?

CAIN.

I know not what thou art: I see thy power,
And see thou show'st me things beyond *my* power,

Beyond all power of my born faculties,
Although inferior still to my desires
And my conceptions.

LUCIFER.

What are they, which dwell
So humbly in their pride, as to sojourn
With worms in clay?

CAIN.

And what art thou, who dwellest
So haughtily in spirit, and canst range
Nature and immortality—and yet
Seem'st sorrowful?

LUCIFER.

I seem that which I am;
And therefore do I ask of thee, if thou
Wouldst be immortal?

CAIN.

Thou hast said, I must be
Immortal in despite of me. I knew not
This until lately—but since it must be,
Let me, or happy or unhappy, learn
To anticipate my immortality.

LUCIFER.

Thou didst before I came upon thee.

CAIN.

How?

LUCIFER.

By suffering.

CAIN.

And must torture be immortal?

LUCIFER.

We and thy sons will try. But now, behold!
Is it not glorious?

CAIN.

Oh, thou beautiful
And unimaginable ether! and
Ye multiplying masses of increased
And still-increasing lights! what are ye? what
Is this blue wilderness of interminable
Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen
The leaves along the limpid streams of Eden?
Is your course measured for ye? Or do ye
Sweep on in your unbounded revelry
Through an aerial universe of endless
Expansion, at which my soul aches to think,
Intoxicated with eternity?
Oh God! Oh Gods! or whatsoe'er ye are!
How beautiful ye are! how beautiful
Your works, or accidents, or whatsoe'er
They may be! Let me die, as atoms die,
(If that they die) or know ye in your might
And knowledge! My thoughts are not in this hour
Unworthy what I see, though my dust is;
Spirit! let me expire, or see them nearer.

LUCIFER.

Art thou not nearer? look back to thine earth!

CAIN.

Where is it? I see nothing save a mass
Of most innumerable lights.

LUCIFER.

Look there!

CAIN.

I cannot see it.

LUCIFER.

Yet it sparkles still.

CAIN.

What, yonder!

LUCIFER.

Yea.

CAIN.

And wilt thou tell me so?
Why, I have seen the fire-flies and fire-worms
Sprinkle the dusky groves and the green banks,
In the dim twilight, brighter than yon world
Which bears them.

LUCIFER.

Thou hast seen both worms and worlds,
Each bright and sparkling,—what dost think of them?

CAIN.

That they are beautiful in their own sphere,
And that the night, which makes both beautiful
The little shining fire-fly in its flight,
And the immortal star in its great course,
Must both be guided.

LUCIFER.

But by whom or what?

CAIN.

Show me.

LUCIFER.

Dar'st thou behold?

CAIN.

How know I what

I *dare* behold? as yet, thou hast shown nought
I dare not gaze on further.

LUCIFER.

On, then, with me.
Wouldst thou behold things mortal or immortal?

CAIN.

Why, what are things?

LUCIFER.

Both partly: but what doth
Sit next thy heart?

CAIN.

The things I see.

LUCIFER.

But what
Sate nearest it?

CAIN.

The things I have not seen,
Nor ever shall—the mysteries of death.

LUCIFER.

What, if I show to thee things which have died,
As I have shown thee much which cannot die?

CAIN.

Do so.

LUCIFER.

Away, then! on our mighty wings.

CAIN.

Oh! how we cleave the blue! The stars fade from us!
The earth! where is my earth? let me look on it,
For I was made of it.

LUCIFER.

'Tis now beyond thee,

Less, in the universe, than thou in it:
Yet deem not that thou canst escape it; thou
Shalt soon return to earth, and all its dust;
'Tis part of thy eternity, and mine.

CAIN.

Where dost thou lead me?

LUCIFER.

To what was before thee!
The phantasm of the world; of which thy world
Is but the wreck.

CAIN.

What! is it not then new?

LUCIFER.

No more than life is; and that was ere thou
Or *I* were, or the things which seem to us
Greater than either: many things will have
No end; and some, which would pretend to have
Had no beginning, have had one as mean
As thou; and mightier things have been extinct
To make way for much meaner than we can
Surmise; for *moments* only and the *space*
Have been and must be all *unchangeable*.
But changes make not death, except to clay;
But thou art clay—and canst but comprehend
That which was clay, and such thou shalt behold.

CAIN.

Clay, spirit! What thou wilt, I can survey.

LUCIFER.

Away, then!

CAIN.

But the lights fade from me fast,

And some till now grew larger as we approach'd,
And wore the look of worlds.

LUCIFER.

And such they are.

CAIN.

And Edens in them?

LUCIFER.

It may be.

CAIN.

And men?

LUCIFER.

Yea, or things higher.

CAIN.

Ay? and serpents too?

LUCIFER.

Wouldst thou have men without them? must no reptiles
Breathe, save the erect ones?

CAIN.

How the lights recede!
Where fly we?

LUCIFER.

To the world of phantoms, which
Are beings past, and shadows still to come.

CAIN.

But it grows dark, and dark—the stars are gone!

LUCIFER.

And yet thou seest.

CAIN.

'Tis a fearful light!
No sun, no moon, no lights innumerable.

The very blue of the empurpled night
Fades to a dreary twilight, yet I see
Huge dusky masses; but unlike the worlds
We were approaching, which, begirt with light,
Seem'd full of life even when their atmosphere
Of light gave way, and show'd them taking shapes
Unequal, of deep valleys and vast mountains;
And some emitting sparks, and some displaying
Enormous liquid plains, and some begirt
With luminous belts, and floating moons, which took
Like them the features of fair earth:—instead,
All here seems dark and dreadful.

LUCIFER.

But distinct.
Thou seekest to behold death, and dead things?

CAIN.

I seek it not; but as I know there are
Such, and that my sire's sin makes him and me,
And all that we inherit, liable
To such, I would behold at once, what I
Must one day see perforce.

LUCIFER.

Behold!

CAIN.

'Tis darkness.

LUCIFER.

And so it shall be ever; but we will
Unfold its gates!

CAIN.

Enormous vapours roll
Apart—what 's this?

LUCIFER.

Enter!

CAIN.

Can I return?

LUCIFER.

Return! be sure: how else should death be peopled?
Its present realm is thin to what it will be,
Through thee and thine.

CAIN.

The clouds still open wide
And wider, and make widening circles round us.

LUCIFER.

Advance!

CAIN.

And thou!

LUCIFER.

Fear not—without me thou
Couldst not have gone beyond thy world. On! on!

[*They disappear through the clouds.*

SCENE II.

Hades.

Enter LUCIFER *and* CAIN.

CAIN.

How silent and how vast are these dim worlds!
For they seem more than one, and yet more peopled
Than the huge brilliant luminous orbs which swung

So thickly in the upper air, that I
Had deem'd them rather the bright populace
Of some all unimaginable Heaven
Than things to be inhabited themselves,
But that on drawing near them I beheld
Their swelling into palpable immensity
Of matter, which seem'd made for life to dwell on,
Rather than life itself. But here, all is
So shadowy and so full of twilight, that
It speaks of a day past.

LUCIFER.

It is the realm
Of death.—Wouldst have it present?

CAIN.

Till I know
That which it really is, I cannot answer.
But if it be as I have heard my father
Deal out in his long homilies, 'tis a thing—
Oh God! I dare not think on 't! Cursed be
He who invented life that leads to death!
Or the dull mass of life, that being life
Could not retain, but needs must forfeit it—
Even for the innocent!

LUCIFER.

Dost thou curse thy father?

CAIN.

Cursed he not me in giving me my birth?
Cursed he not me before my birth, in daring
To pluck the fruit forbidden?

LUCIFER.

Thou say'st well:
The curse is mutual 'twixt thy sire and thee—
But for thy sons and brother?

CAIN.

Let them share it
With me, their sire and brother! What else is
Bequeath'd to me? I leave them my inheritance.
Oh ye interminable gloomy realms
Of swimming shadows and enormous shapes,
Some fully shown, some indistinct, and all
Mighty and melancholy—what are ye?
Live ye, or have ye lived?

LUCIFER.

Somewhat of both.

CAIN.

Then what is death?

LUCIFER.

What? Hath not he who made ye
Said 'tis another life?

CAIN.

Till now he hath
Said nothing, save that all shall die.

LUCIFER.

Perhaps
He one day will unfold that further secret.

CAIN.

Happy the day!

LUCIFER.

Yes; happy! when unfolded

Through agonies unspeakable, and clogg'd
With agonies eternal, to innumerable
Yet unborn myriads of unconscious atoms,
All to be animated for this only!

CAIN.

What are these mighty phantoms which I see
Floating around me?—they wear not the form
Of the intelligences I have seen
Round our regretted and unenter'd Eden,
Nor wear the form of man as I have view'd it
In Adam's, and in Abel's, and in mine,
Nor in my sister-bride's, nor in my children's:
And yet they have an aspect, which, though not
Of men nor angels, looks like something, which,
If not the last, rose higher than the first,
Haughty, and high, and beautiful, and full
Of seeming strength, but of inexplicable
Shape; for I never saw such. They bear not
The wing of seraph, nor the face of man,
Nor form of mightiest brute, nor aught that is
Now breathing; mighty yet and beautiful
As the most beautiful and mighty which
Live, and yet so unlike them, that I scarce
Can call them living.

LUCIFER.

Yet they lived.

CAIN.

Where?

LUCIFER.

Where

Thou livest.

CAIN.

When?

LUCIFER.

On what thou callest earth
They did inhabit.

CAIN.

Adam is the first.

LUCIFER.

Of thine, I grant thee—but too mean to be
The last of these.

CAIN.

And what are they?

LUCIFER.

That which
Thou shalt be.

CAIN.

But what *were* they?

LUCIFER.

Living, high,
Intelligent, good, great, and glorious things,
As much superior unto all thy sire,
Adam, could e'er have been in Eden, as
The sixty-thousandth generation shall be,
In its dull damp degeneracy, to
Thee and thy son;—and how weak they are, judge
By thy own flesh.

CAIN.

Ah me! and did *they* perish?

LUCIFER.

Yes, from their earth, as thou wilt fade from thine.

CAIN.

But was *mine* theirs?

LUCIFER.

It was.

CAIN.

But not as now.
It is too little and too lowly to
Sustain such creatures.

LUCIFER.

True, it was more glorious.

CAIN.

And wherefore did it fall?

LUCIFER.

Ask him who fells.

CAIN.

But how?

LUCIFER.

By a most crushing and inexorable
Destruction and disorder of the elements,
Which struck a world to chaos, as a chaos
Subsiding has struck out a world: such things,
Though rare in time, are frequent in eternity.—
Pass on, and gaze upon the past.

CAIN.

'Tis awful!

LUCIFER.

And true. Behold these phantoms! they were once
Material as thou art.

CAIN.

And must I be
Like them?

LUCIFER.

Let He who made thee answer that.
I show thee what thy predecessors are,
And what they *were* thou feelest, in degree
Inferior as thy petty feelings and
Thy pettier portion of the immortal part
Of high intelligence and earthly strength.
What ye in common have with what they had
Is life, and what ye *shall* have—death; the rest
Of your poor attributes is such as suits
Reptiles engender'd out of the subsiding
Slime of a mighty universe, crush'd into
A scarcely-yet shaped planet, peopled with
Things whose enjoyment was to be in blindness—
A Paradise of Ignorance, from which
Knowledge was barr'd as poison. But behold
What these superior beings are or were;
Or, if it irk thee, turn thee back and till
The earth, thy task—I 'll waft thee there in safety.

CAIN.

No: I 'll stay here.

LUCIFER.

How long?

CAIN.

For ever! Since
I must one day return here from the earth,
I rather would remain; I am sick of all
That dust has shown me—let me dwell in shadows.

LUCIFER.

It cannot be: thou now beholdest as

A vision that which is reality.
To make thyself fit for this dwelling, thou
Must pass through what the things thou see'st have pass'd—
The gates of death.

CAIN.

By what gate have we enter'd
Even now?

LUCIFER.

By mine! But, plighted to return,
My spirit buoys thee up to breathe in regions
Where all is breathless save thyself. Gaze on;
But do not think to dwell here till thine hour
Is come.

CAIN.

And these, too; can they ne'er repass
To earth again?

LUCIFER.

Their earth is gone for ever—
So changed by its convulsion, they would not
Be conscious to a single present spot
Of its new scarcely harden'd surface—'twas—
Oh, what a beautiful world it *was!*

CAIN.

And is.
It is not with the earth, though I must till it,
I feel at war, but that I may not profit
By what it bears of beautiful untoiling,
Nor gratify my thousand swelling thoughts
With knowledge, nor allay my thousand fears
Of death and life.

LUCIFER.

What thy world is, thou see'st,
But canst not comprehend the shadow of
That which it was.

CAIN.

And those enormous creatures,
Phantoms inferior in intelligence
(At least so seeming) to the things we have pass'd,
Resembling somewhat the wild habitants
Of the deep woods of earth, the hugest which
Roar nightly in the forest, but ten-fold
In magnitude and terror; taller than
The cherub-guarded walls of Eden, with
Eyes flashing like the fiery swords which fence them,
And tusks projecting like the trees stripp'd of
Their bark and branches—what were they?

LUCIFER.

That which
The Mammoth is in thy world;—but these lie
By myriads underneath its surface.

CAIN.

But
None on it?

LUCIFER.

No: for thy frail race to war
With them would render the curse on it useless—
'T would be destroy'd so early.

CAIN.

But why *war?*

LUCIFER.

You have forgotten the denunciation

Which drove your race from Eden—war with all things,
And death to all things, and disease to most things,
And pangs, and bitterness; these were the fruits
Of the forbidden tree.

CAIN.

But animals—
Did they too eat of it, that they must die?

LUCIFER.

Your Maker told ye, *they* were made for you,
As you for him.—You would not have their doom
Superior to your own? Had Adam not
Fallen, all had stood.

CAIN.

Alas! the hopeless wretches!
They too must share my sire's fate, like his sons;
Like them, too, without having shared the apple;
Like them, too, without the so dear-bought *knowledge!*
It was a lying tree—for we *know* nothing.
At least it *promised knowledge* at the *price*
Of death—but *knowledge* still: but what *knows* man?

LUCIFER.

It may be death leads to the *highest* knowledge;
And being of all things the sole thing certain,
At least leads to the *surest* science: therefore
The tree was true, though deadly.

CAIN.

These dim realms!
I see them, but I know them not.

LUCIFER.

Because

Thy hour is yet afar, and matter cannot
Comprehend spirit wholly—but 'tis something
To know there are such realms.

CAIN.

We knew already
That there was death.

LUCIFER.

But not what was beyond it.

CAIN.

Nor know I now.

LUCIFER.

Thou know'st that there is
A state, and many states beyond thine own—
And this thou knewest not this morn.

CAIN.

But all
Seems dim and shadowy.

LUCIFER.

Be content; it will
Seem clearer to thine immortality.

CAIN.

And yon immeasurable liquid space
Of glorious azure which floats on beyond us,
Which looks like water, and which I should deem
The river which flows out of Paradise
Past my own dwelling, but that it is bankless
And boundless, and of an ethereal hue—
What is it?

LUCIFER.

There is still some such on earth,

Although inferior, and thy children shall
Dwell near it—'tis the phantasm of an ocean.

CAIN.

'Tis like another world; a liquid sun—
And those inordinate creatures sporting o'er
Its shining surface?

LUCIFER.

Are its habitants,
The past leviathans.

CAIN.

And yon immense
Serpent, which rears his dripping mane and vasty
Head ten times higher than the haughtiest cedar
Forth from the abyss, looking as he could coil
Himself around the orbs we lately look'd on—
Is he not of the kind which bask'd beneath
The tree in Eden?

LUCIFER.

Eve, thy mother, best
Can tell what shape of serpent tempted her.

CAIN.

This seems too terrible. No doubt the other
Had more of beauty.

LUCIFER.

Hast thou ne'er beheld him?

CAIN.

Many of the same kind (at least so call'd),
But never that precisely which persuaded
The fatal fruit, nor even of the same aspect.

LUCIFER.

Your father saw him not?

CAIN.

No: 'twas my mother
Who tempted him—she tempted by the serpent.

LUCIFER.

Good man! whene'er thy wife, or thy sons' wives
Tempt thee or them to aught that's new or strange,
Be sure thou see'st first who hath tempted *them*.

CAIN.

Thy precept comes too late: there is no more
For serpents to tempt woman to.

LUCIFER.

But there
Are some things still which woman may tempt man to,
And man tempt woman:—let thy sons look to it!
My counsel is a kind one; for 'tis even
Given chiefly at my own expense: 'tis true,
'T will not be follow'd, so there's little lost.

CAIN.

I understand not this.

LUCIFER.

The happier thou!—
Thy world and thou are still too young! Thou thinkest
Thyself most wicked and unhappy: is it
Not so?

CAIN.

For crime, I know not; but for pain,
I have felt much.

LUCIFER.

First-born of the first man!

Thy present state of sin—and thou art evil,
Of sorrow—and thou sufferest, are both Eden
In all its innocence compared to what
Thou shortly may'st be; and that state again,
In its redoubled wretchedness, a Paradise
To what thy sons' sons' sons, accumulating
In generations like to dust, (which they
In fact but add to,) shall endure and do.—
Now let us back to earth!

CAIN.

And wherefore didst thou
Lead me here only to inform me this?

LUCIFER.

Was not thy quest for knowledge?

CAIN.

Yes: as being
The road to happiness.

LUCIFER.

If truth be so,
Thou hast it.

CAIN.

Then my father's God did well
When he prohibited the fatal tree.

LUCIFER.

But had done better in not planting it.
But ignorance of evil doth not save
From evil; it must still roll on the same,
A part of all things.

CAIN.

Not of all things. No:
I 'll not believe it—for I thirst for good.

LUCIFER.

And who and what doth not? *Who* covets evil
For its own bitter sake?—*None*—nothing! 'tis
The leaven of all life, and lifelessness.

CAIN.

Within those glorious orbs which we behold,
Distant and dazzling, and innumerable,
Ere we came down into this phantom realm,
Ill cannot come; they are too beautiful.

LUCIFER.

Thou hast seen them from afar.

CAIN.

And what of that?
Distance can but diminish glory—they
When nearer must be more ineffable.

LUCIFER.

Approach the things of earth most beautiful,
And judge their beauty near.

CAIN.

I have done this—
The loveliest thing I know is loveliest nearest.

LUCIFER.

Then there must be delusion—What is that,
Which being nearest to thine eyes is still
More beautiful than beauteous things remote?

CAIN.

My sister Adah.—All the stars of heaven,
The deep blue noon of night, lit by an orb
Which looks a spirit, or a spirit's world—
The hues of twilight—the sun's gorgeous coming—

His setting indescribable, which fills
My eyes with pleasant tears as I behold
Him sink, and feel my heart float softly with him
Along that western paradise of clouds—
The forest shade—the green bough—the bird's voice—
The vesper bird's, which seems to sing of love,
And mingles with the song of cherubim,
As the day closes over Eden's walls;—
All these are nothing, to my eyes and heart,
Like Adah's face: I turn from earth and heaven
To gaze on it.

LUCIFER.

'Tis frail as fair mortality,
In the first dawn and bloom of young creation
And earliest embraces of earth's parents,
Can make its offspring; still it is delusion.

CAIN.

You think so, being not her brother.

LUCIFER.

Mortal!
My brotherhood's with those who have no children.

CAIN.

Then thou canst have no fellowship with us.

LUCIFER.

It may be that thine own shall be for me.
But if thou dost possess a beautiful
Being beyond all beauty in thine eyes,
Why art thou wretched?

CAIN.

Why do I exist?

Why art *thou* wretched? why are all things so?
Ev'n he who made us must be, as the maker
Of things unhappy! To produce destruction
Can surely never be the task of joy,
And yet my sire says he's omnipotent:
Then why is evil—he being good? I ask'd
This question of my father; and he said,
Because this evil only was the path
To good. Strange good, that must arise from out
Its deadly opposite. I lately saw
A lamb stung by a reptile: the poor suckling
Lay foaming on the earth, beneath the vain
And piteous bleating of its restless dam;
My father pluck'd some herbs, and laid them to
The wound; and by degrees the helpless wretch
Resumed its careless life, and rose to drain
The mother's milk, who o'er it tremulous
Stood licking its reviving limbs with joy.
Behold, my son! said Adam, how from evil
Springs good!

LUCIFER.

What didst thou answer?

CAIN.

Nothing; for
He is my father: but I thought, that 'twere
A better portion for the animal
Never to have been *stung at all*, than to
Purchase renewal of its little life
With agonies unutterable, though
Dispell'd by antidotes.

LUCIFER.

But as thou saidst
Of all beloved things thou lovest her
Who shared thy mother's milk, and giveth hers
Unto thy children——

CAIN.

Most assuredly:
What should I be without her?

LUCIFER.

What am I?

CAIN.

Dost thou love nothing?

LUCIFER.

What does thy God love?

CAIN.

All things, my father says; but I confess
I see it not in their allotment here.

LUCIFER.

And, therefore, thou canst not see if *I* love
Or no, except some vast and general purpose,
To which particular things must melt like snows.

CAIN.

Snows! what are they?

LUCIFER.

Be happier in not knowing
What thy remoter offspring must encounter;
But bask beneath the clime which knows no winter!

CAIN.

But dost thou not love something like thyself?

LUCIFER.

And dost thou love *thyself*?

CAIN.

Yes, but love more
What makes my feelings more endurable,
And is more than myself, because I love it.

LUCIFER.

Thou lovest it, because 'tis beautiful
As was the apple in thy mother's eye;
And when it ceases to be so, thy love
Will cease, like any other appetite.

CAIN.

Cease to be beautiful! how can that be?

LUCIFER.

With time.

CAIN.

But time has past, and hitherto
Even Adam and my mother both are fair:
Not fair like Adah and the seraphim—
But very fair.

LUCIFER.

All that must pass away
In them and her.

CAIN.

I 'm sorry for it; but
Cannot conceive my love for her the less.
And when her beauty disappears, methinks
He who creates all beauty will lose more
Than me in seeing perish such a work.

LUCIFER.

I pity thee who lovest what must perish.

CAIN.

And I thee who lov'st nothing.

LUCIFER.

And thy brother—
Sits he not near thy heart?

CAIN.

Why should he not?

LUCIFER.

Thy father loves him well—so does thy God.

CAIN.

And so do I.

LUCIFER.

'Tis well and meekly done.

CAIN.

Meekly!

LUCIFER.

He is the second born of flesh,
And is his mother's favourite.

CAIN.

Let him keep
Her favour, since the serpent was the first
To win it.

LUCIFER.

And his father's?

CAIN.

What is that
To me? should I not love that which all love?

LUCIFER.

And the Jehovah—the indulgent Lord,
And bounteous planter of barr'd Paradise—
He, too, looks smilingly on Abel.

CAIN.

I
Ne'er saw him, and I know not if he smiles.

LUCIFER.

But you have seen his angels.

CAIN.

Rarely.

LUCIFER.

But
Sufficiently to see they love your brother;
His sacrifices are acceptable.

CAIN.

So be they! wherefore speak to me of this?

LUCIFER.

Because thou hast thought of this ere now.

CAIN.

And if
I *have* thought, why recall a thought that——(*he pauses, as agitated*)—Spirit!
Here we are in *thy* world; speak not of *mine*.
Thou hast shown me wonders; thou hast shown me those
Mighty Pre-Adamites who walk'd the earth
Of which ours is the wreck; thou hast pointed out
Myriads of starry worlds, of which our own
Is the dim and remote companion, in
Infinity of life: thou hast shown me shadows

Of that existence with the dreaded name
Which my sire brought us—Death; thou hast shown me much—
But not all: show me where Jehovah dwells,
In his especial Paradise—or *thine:*
Where is it?

LUCIFER.

Here, and o'er all space.

CAIN.

But ye
Have some allotted dwelling—as all things;
Clay has its earth, and other worlds their tenants;
All temporary breathing creatures their
Peculiar element; and things which have
Long ceased to breathe *our* breath, have theirs, thou say'st;
And the Jehovah and thyself have thine—
Ye do not dwell together?

LUCIFER.

No, we reign
Together; but our dwellings are asunder.

CAIN.

Would there were only one of ye! perchance
An unity of purpose might make union
In elements which seem now jarr'd in storms.
How came ye, being spirits, wise and infinite,
To separate? Are ye not as brethren in
Your essence, and your nature, and your glory?

LUCIFER.

Art thou not Abel's brother?

CAIN.

We are brethren,
And so we shall remain; but were it not so,
Is spirit like to flesh? can it fall out?
Infinity with Immortality?
Jarring and turning space to misery—
For what?

LUCIFER.

To reign.

CAIN.

Did ye not tell me that
Ye are both eternal?

LUCIFER.

Yea!

CAIN.

And what I have seen,
Yon blue immensity, is boundless?

LUCIFER.

Ay.

CAIN.

And cannot ye both *reign* then?—is there not
Enough?—why should ye differ?

LUCIFER.

We *both* reign.

CAIN.

But one of you makes evil.

LUCIFER.

Which?

CAIN.

Thou! for
If thou canst do man good, why dost thou not?

LUCIFER.

And why not he who made? *I* made ye not;
Ye are *his* creatures, and not mine.

CAIN.

Then leave us
His creatures, as thou say'st we are, or show me
Thy dwelling, or *his* dwelling.

LUCIFER.

I could show thee
Both; but the time will come thou shalt see one
Of them for evermore.

CAIN.

And why not now?

LUCIFER.

Thy human mind hath scarcely grasp to gather
The little I have shown thee into calm
And clear thought; and *thou* wouldst go on aspiring
To the great double Mysteries! the *two Principles!*
And gaze upon them on their secret thrones!
Dust! limit thy ambition; for to see
Either of these, would be for thee to perish!

CAIN.

And let me perish, so I see them!

LUCIFER.

There
The son of her who snatch'd the apple spake!
But thou wouldst only perish, and not see them;
That sight is for the other state.

CAIN.

Of death?

LUCIFER.

That is the prelude.

CAIN.

Then I dread it less,
Now that I know it leads to something definite.

LUCIFER.

And now I will convey thee to thy world,
Where thou shalt multiply the race of Adam,
Eat, drink, toil, tremble, laugh, weep, sleep, and die.

CAIN.

And to what end have I beheld these things
Which thou hast shown me?

LUCIFER.

Didst thou not require
Knowledge? And have I not, in what I show'd,
Taught thee to know thyself?

CAIN.

Alas! I seem
Nothing.

LUCIFER.

And this should be the human sum
Of knowledge, to know mortal nature's nothingness;
Bequeath that science to thy children, and
'Twill spare them many tortures.

CAIN.

Haughty spirit!
Thou speak'st it proudly; but thyself, though proud,
Hast a superior.

LUCIFER.

No! By heaven, which He

Holds, and the abyss, and the immensity
Of worlds and life, which I hold with him—No!
I have a victor—true; but no superior.
Homage he has from all—but none from me:
I battle it against him, as I battled
In highest heaven. Through all eternity,
And the unfathomable gulfs of Hades,
And the interminable realms of space,
And the infinity of endless ages,
All, all, will I dispute! And world by world,
And star by star, and universe by universe
Shall tremble in the balance, till the great
Conflict shall cease, if ever it shall cease,
Which it ne'er shall, till he or I be quench'd!
And what can quench our immortality,
Or mutual and irrevocable hate?
He as a conqueror will call the conquer'd
Evil; but what will be the *good* he gives?
Were I the victor, *his* works would be deem'd
The only evil ones. And you, ye new
And scarce-born mortals, what have been his gifts
To you already in your little world?

CAIN.

But few; and some of those but bitter.

LUCIFER.

Back
With me, then, to thine earth, and try the rest
Of his celestial boons to ye and yours.
Evil and good are things in their own essence,
And not made good or evil by the giver;

But if he gives you good—so call him; if
Evil springs from *him*, do not name it *mine*,
Till ye know better its true fount; and judge
Not by words, though of spirits, but the fruits
Of your existence, such as it must be.
One good gift has the fatal apple given—
Your *reason*:—let it not be over-sway'd
By tyrannous threats to force you into faith
'Gainst all external sense and inward feeling:
Think and endure,—and form an inner world
In your own bosom—where the outward fails;
So shall you nearer be the spiritual
Nature, and war triumphant with your own.

[*They disappear.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Earth near Eden, as in Act I.

Enter CAIN *and* ADAH.

ADAH.

Hush! tread softly, Cain.

CAIN.

I will; but wherefore?

ADAH.

Our little Enoch sleeps upon yon bed
Of leaves, beneath the cypress.

CAIN.

Cypress! 'tis
A gloomy tree, which looks as if it mourn'd
O'er what it shadows; wherefore didst thou choose it
For our child's canopy?

ADAH.

Because its branches
Shut out the sun like night, and therefore seem'd
Fitting to shadow slumber.

CAIN.

Ay, the last—
And longest; but no matter—lead me to him.

[*They go up to the child.*

How lovely he appears! his little cheeks,
In their pure incarnation, vying with
The rose leaves strewn beneath them.

ADAH.

And his lips, too,
How beautifully parted! No; you shall not
Kiss him, at least not now: he will awake soon—
His hour of mid-day rest is nearly over;
But it were pity to disturb him till
'Tis closed.

CAIN.

You have said well; I will contain
My heart till then. He smiles, and sleeps!—Sleep on
And smile, thou little, young inheritor
Of a world scarce less young: sleep on, and smile!
Thine are the hours and days when both are cheering
And innocent! *thou* hast not pluck'd the fruit—
Thou know'st not thou art naked! Must the time
Come thou shalt be amerced for sins unknown,
Which were not thine nor mine? But now sleep on!
His cheeks are reddening into deeper smiles,
And shining lids are trembling o'er his long
Lashes, dark as the cypress which waves o'er them;
Half open, from beneath them the clear blue
Laughs out, although in slumber. He must dream—
Of what? Of Paradise!—Ay! dream of it,

My disinherited boy! 'Tis but a dream;
For never more thyself, thy sons, nor fathers,
Shall walk in that forbidden place of joy!

ADAH.

Dear Cain! Nay, do not whisper o'er our son
Such melancholy yearnings o'er the past:
Why wilt thou always mourn for Paradise?
Can we not make another?

CAIN.

Where?

ADAH.

Here, or
Where'er thou wilt. where'er thou art, I feel not
The want of this so much regretted Eden.
Have I not thee, our boy, our sire, and brother,
And Zillah—our sweet sister, and our Eve,
To whom we owe so much besides our birth?

CAIN.

Yes—death, too, is amongst the debts we owe her.

ADAH.

Cain! that proud spirit, who withdrew thee hence,
Hath sadden'd thine still deeper. I had hoped
The promised wonders which thou hast beheld,
Visions, thou say'st, of past and present worlds,
Would have composed thy mind into the calm
Of a contented knowledge; but I see
Thy guide hath done thee evil: still I thank him,
And can forgive him all, that he so soon
Hath given thee back to us.

CAIN.

So soon?

ADAH.

'Tis scarcely
Two hours since ye departed: two *long* hours
To *me*, but only *hours* upon the sun.

CAIN.

And yet I have approach'd that sun, and seen
Worlds which he once shone on, and never more
Shall light; and worlds he never lit: methought
Years had roll'd o'er my absence.

ADAH.

Hardly hours.

CAIN.

The mind then hath capacity of time,
And measures it by that which it beholds,
Pleasing or painful; little or almighty.
I had beheld the immemorial works
Of endless beings; skirr'd extinguish'd worlds;
And, gazing on eternity, methought
I had borrow'd more by a few drops of ages
From its immensity; but now I feel
My littleness again. Well said the spirit,
That I was nothing!

ADAH.

Wherefore said he so?
Jehovah said not that.

CAIN.

No: *he* contents him
With making us the *nothing* which we are;
And after flattering dust with glimpses of
Eden and Immortality, resolves
It back to dust again—for what?

ADAH.

Thou know'st—
Even for our parents' error.

CAIN.

What is that
To us? they sinn'd, then *let them* die!

ADAH.

Thou hast not spoken well, nor is that thought
Thy own, but of the spirit who was with thee.
Would *I* could die for them, so *they* might live!

CAIN.

Why, so say I—provided that one victim
Might satiate the insatiable of life,
And that our little rosy sleeper there
Might never taste of death nor human sorrow,
Nor hand it down to those who spring from him.

ADAH.

How know we that some such atonement one day
May not redeem our race?

CAIN.

By sacrificing
The harmless for the guilty? what atonement
Were there? why, *we* are innocent: what have we
Done, that we must be victims for a deed
Before our birth, or need have victims to
Atone for this mysterious, nameless sin—
If it be such a sin to seek for knowledge?

ADAH.

Alas! thou sinnest now, my Cain; thy words
Sound impious in mine ears.

CAIN.

Then leave me!

ADAH.

Never,
Though thy God left thee.

CAIN.

Say, what have we here?

ADAH.

Two altars, which our brother Abel made
During thine absence, whereupon to offer
A sacrifice to God on thy return.

CAIN.

And how knew *he*, that *I* would be so ready
With the burnt offerings, which he daily brings
With a meek brow, whose base humility
Shows more of fear than worship, as a bribe
To the Creator?

ADAH.

Surely, 'tis well done.

CAIN.

One altar may suffice; *I* have no offering.

ADAH.

The fruits of the earth, the early, beautiful
Blossom and bud, and bloom of flowers, and fruits;
These are a goodly offering to the Lord,
Given with a gentle and a contrite spirit.

CAIN.

I have toil'd, and till'd, and sweaten in the sun
According to the curse:—must I do more?
For what should I be gentle? for a war

With all the elements ere they will yield
The bread we eat? For what must I be grateful?
For being dust, and groveling in the dust,
Till I return to dust? If I am nothing—
For nothing shall I be an hypocrite,
And seem well-pleased with pain? For what should I
Be contrite? for my father's sin, already
Expiate with what we all have undergone,
And to be more than expiated by
The ages prophesied, upon our seed.
Little deems our young blooming sleeper, there,
The germs of an eternal misery
To myriads is within him! better 'twere
I snatch'd him in his sleep, and dash'd him 'gainst
The rocks, than let him live to——

ADAH.

Oh, my God!
Touch not the child—my child! *thy* child! Oh Cain!

CAIN.

Fear not! for all the stars, and all the power
Which sways them, I would not accost yon infant
With ruder greeting than a father's kiss.

ADAH.

Then, why so awful in thy speech?

CAIN.

I said,
'Twere better that he ceased to live, than give
Life to so much of sorrow as he must
Endure, and, harder still, bequeath; but since
That saying jars you, let us only say—
'Twere better that he never had been born.

ADAH.

Oh, do not say so! Where were then the joys,
The mother's joys of watching, nourishing,
And loving him? Soft! he awakes. Sweet Enoch!
[*She goes to the child.*
Oh Cain! look on him; see how full of life,
Of strength, of bloom, of beauty, and of joy,
How like to me—how like to thee, when gentle,
For *then* we are *all* alike; is 't not so, Cain?
Mother, and sire, and son, our features are
Reflected in each other; as they are
In the clear waters, when *they* are *gentle*, and
When *thou* art *gentle*. Love us, then, my Cain!
And love thyself for our sakes, for we love thee.
Look! how he laughs and stretches out his arms,
And opens wide his blue eyes upon thine,
To hail his father; while his little form
Flutters as wing'd with joy. Talk not of pain!
The childless cherubs well might envy thee
The pleasures of a parent! Bless him, Cain!
As yet he hath no words to thank thee, but
His heart will, and thine own too.

CAIN.

Bless thee, boy!
If that a mortal blessing may avail thee,
To save thee from the serpent's curse!

ADAH.

It shall.
Surely a father's blessing may avert
A reptile's subtlety.

CAIN.

Of that I doubt;
But bless him ne'er the less.

ADAH.

Our brother comes.

CAIN.

Thy brother Abel.

Enter ABEL.

ABEL.

Welcome, Cain! My brother,
The peace of God be on thee!

CAIN.

Abel, hail!

ABEL.

Our sister tells me that thou hast been wandering,
In high communion with a spirit, far
Beyond our wonted range. Was he of those
We have seen and spoken with, like to our father?

CAIN.

No.

ABEL.

Why then commune with him? he may be
A foe to the Most High.

CAIN.

And friend to man.
Has the Most High been so—if so you term him?

ABEL.

Term him! your words are strange to-day, my brother.
My sister Adah, leave us for a while—
We mean to sacrifice.

ADAH.

Farewell, my Cain;
But first embrace thy son. May his soft spirit,
And Abel's pious ministry, recall thee
To peace and holiness!

[*Exit* ADAH, *with her child.*

ABEL.

Where hast thou been?

CAIN.

I know not.

ABEL.

Nor what thou hast seen?

CAIN.

The dead,
The immortal, the unbounded, the omnipotent,
The overpowering mysteries of space—
The innumerable worlds that were and are—
A whirlwind of such overwhelming things,
Suns, moons, and earths, upon their loud-voiced spheres
Singing in thunder round me, as have made me
Unfit for mortal converse: leave me, Abel.

ABEL.

Thine eyes are flashing with unnatural light—
Thy cheek is flush'd with an unnatural hue—
Thy words are fraught with an unnatural sound—
What may this mean?

CAIN.

It means——I pray thee, leave me.

ABEL.

Not till we have pray'd and sacrificed together.

CAIN.

Abel, I pray thee, sacrifice alone—
Jehovah loves thee well.

ABEL.

Both well, I hope.

CAIN.

But thee the better: I care not for that;
Thou art fitter for his worship than I am:
Revere him, then—but let it be alone—
At least, without me.

ABEL.

Brother, I should ill
Deserve the name of our great father's son,
If as my elder I revered thee not,
And in the worship of our God call'd not
On thee to join me, and precede me in
Our priesthood—'tis thy place.

CAIN.

But I have ne'er
Asserted it.

ABEL.

The more my grief; I pray thee
To do so now: thy soul seems labouring in
Some strong delusion; it will calm thee.

CAIN.

No;
Nothing can calm me more. *Calm!* say I? Never
Knew I what calm was in the soul, although
I have seen the elements still'd. My Abel, leave me!
Or let me leave thee to thy pious purpose.

ABEL.

Neither; we must perform our task together.
Spurn me not.

CAIN.

If it must be so——well, then,
What shall I do?

ABEL.

Choose one of those two altars.

CAIN.

Choose for me: they to me are so much turf
And stone.

ABEL.

Choose thou!

CAIN.

I have chosen.

ABEL.

'Tis the highest,
And suits thee, as the elder. Now prepare
Thine offerings.

CAIN.

Where are thine?

ABEL.

Behold them here—
The firstlings of the flock, and fat thereof—
A shepherd's humble offering.

CAIN.

I have no flocks;
I am a tiller of the ground, and must
Yield what it yieldeth to my toil—its fruit:

[*He gathers fruits.*

Behold them in their various bloom and ripeness.

[*They dress their altars, and kindle a flame upon them.*

ABEL.

My brother, as the elder, offer first
Thy prayer and thanksgiving with sacrifice.

CAIN.

No—I am new to this; lead thou the way,
And I will follow—as I may.

ABEL *(kneeling)*.

Oh God!
Who made us, and who breathed the breath of life
Within our nostrils, who hath blessed us,
And spared, despite our father's sin, to make
His children all lost, as they might have been,
Had not thy justice been so temper'd with
The mercy which is thy delight, as to
Accord a pardon like a Paradise,
Compared with our great crimes:—Sole Lord of light!
Of good, and glory, and eternity;
Without whom all were evil, and with whom
Nothing can err, except to some good end
Of thine omnipotent benevolence—
Inscrutable, but still to be fulfill'd—
Accept from out thy humble first of shepherd's
First of the first-born flocks—an offering,
In itself nothing—as what offering can be
Aught unto thee?—but yet accept it for
The thanksgiving of him who spreads it in
The face of thy high heaven, bowing his own

Even to the dust, of which he is, in honour
Of thee, and of thy name, for evermore!

CAIN (*standing erect during this speech*).

Spirit! whate'er or whosoe'er thou art,
Omnipotent, it may be—and, if good,
Shown in the exemption of thy deeds from evil;
Jehovah upon earth! and God in heaven!
And it may be with other names, because
Thine attributes seem many, as thy works:—
If thou must be propitiated with prayers,
Take them! If thou must be induced with altars,
And soften'd with a sacrifice, receive them!
Two beings here erect them unto thee.
If thou lov'st blood, the shepherd's shrine, which smokes
On my right hand, hath shed it for thy service
In the first of his flock, whose limbs now reek
In sanguinary incense to thy skies;
Or if the sweet and blooming fruits of earth,
And milder seasons, which the unstain'd turf
I spread them on now offers in the face
Of the broad sun which ripen'd them, may seem
Good to thee, inasmuch as they have not
Suffer'd in limb or life, and rather form
A sample of thy works, than supplication
To look on ours! If a shrine without victim,
And altar without gore, may win thy favour,
Look on it! and for him who dresseth it,
He is—such as thou mad'st him; and seeks nothing
Which must be won by kneeling: if he 's evil,
Strike him! thou art omnipotent, and may'st,—

For what can he oppose? If he be good,
Strike him, or spare him, as thou wilt! since all
Rests upon thee; and good and evil seem
To have no power themselves, save in thy will;
And whether that be good or ill I know not,
Not being omnipotent, nor fit to judge
Omnipotence, but merely to endure
Its mandate; which thus far I have endured.

The fire upon the altar of ABEL *kindles into a column of the brightest flame, and ascends to heaven; while a whirlwind throws down the altar of Cain, and scatters the fruits abroad upon the earth.*

ABEL *(kneeling).*

Oh, brother, pray! Jehovah's wroth with thee!

CAIN.

Why so?

ABEL.

Thy fruits are scatter'd on the earth.

CAIN.

From earth they came, to earth let them return;
Their seed will bear fresh fruit there ere the summer:
Thy burnt flesh-off'ring prospers better; see
How heav'n licks up the flames, when thick with blood!

ABEL.

Think not upon my off'ring's acceptance,
But make another of thine own before
It is too late.

CAIN.

I will build no more altars,
Nor suffer any.—

ABEL *(rising)*.

Cain! what meanest thou?

CAIN.

To cast down yon vile flatt'rer of the clouds,
The smoky harbinger of thy dull pray'rs—
Thine altar, with its blood of lambs and kids,
Which fed on milk, to be destroy'd in blood.

ABEL *(opposing him)*.

Thou shalt not:—add not impious works to impious
Words! let that altar stand—'tis hallow'd now
By the immortal pleasure of Jehovah,
In his acceptance of the victims.

CAIN.

His!

His pleasure! what was his high pleasure in
The fumes of scorching flesh and smoking blood,
To the pain of the bleating mothers, which
Still yearn for their dead offspring? or the pangs
Of the sad ignorant victims underneath
Thy pious knife? Give way! this bloody record
Shall not stand in the sun, to shame creation!

ABEL.

Brother, give back! thou shalt not touch my altar
With violence: if that thou wilt adopt it,
To try another sacrifice, 'tis thine.

CAIN.

Another sacrifice! Give way, or else
That sacrifice may be——

ABEL.

What meanest thou?

CAIN.

Give—
Give way!—thy God loves blood!—then look to it:—
Give way, ere he hath *more!*

ABEL.

In *his* great name,
I stand between thee and the shrine which hath
Had his acceptance.

CAIN.

If thou lov'st thyself,
Stand back till I have strew'd this turf along
Its native soil:—else——

ABEL *(opposing him).*

I love God far more
Than life.

CAIN *(striking him with a brand, on the temples, which he snatches from the altar).*

Then take thy life unto thy God,
Since he loves lives.

ABEL *(falls).*

What hast thou done, my brother?

CAIN.

Brother!

ABEL.

Oh, God! receive thy servant, and
Forgive his slayer, for he knew not what
He did.—Cain, give me—give me thy hand; and tell
Poor Zillah——

CAIN *(after a moment's stupefaction).*

My hand! 'tis all red, and with—

What?

[*A long pause.—Looking slowly round.*

Where am I? alone! Where's Abel? where
Cain? Can it be that I am he? My brother,
Awake!—why liest thou so on the green earth?
'Tis not the hour of slumber:—why so pale?
What, hast thou!——thou wert full of life this morn!
Abel! I pray thee, mock me not! I smote
Too fiercely, but not fatally. Ah, why
Would'st thou oppose me? This is mockery;
And only done to daunt me:—'twas a blow—
And but a blow. Stir—stir—nay, only stir!
Why, so—that 's well!—thou breath'st! breathe upon me!
Oh, God! Oh, God!

ABEL (*very faintly*).

What 's he who speaks of God?

CAIN.

Thy murderer.

ABEL.

Then may God forgive him! Cain,
Comfort poor Zillah:—she has but one brother
Now. [ABEL *dies.*

CAIN.

And I none!—Who makes me brotherless?
His eyes are open! then he is not dead!
Death is like sleep; and sleep shuts down our lids.
His lips, too, are apart; why then he breathes!
And yet I feel it not.—His heart!—his heart!—
Let me see, doth it beat?—methinks——No!—no!
This is a vision, else I am become

The native of another and worse world.
The earth swims round me:—what is this?—'tis wet;
[*Puts his hand to his brow, and then looks at it.*
And yet there are no dews! 'Tis blood—my blood—
My brother's and my own; and shed by me!
Then what have I further to do with life,
Since I have taken life from my own flesh?
But he can not be dead!—Is silence death?
No; he will wake: then let me watch by him.
Life cannot be so slight, as to be quench'd
Thus quickly!—he hath spoken to me since—
What shall I say to him?—My brother!—No;
He will not answer to that name; for brethren
Smite not each other. Yet—yet—speak to me.
Oh! for a word more of that gentle voice,
That I may bear to hear my own again!

Enter ZILLAH.

ZILLAH.

I heard a heavy sound: what can it be?
'Tis Cain; and watching by my husband. What
Dost thou there, brother? Doth he sleep? Oh! heav'n!
What means this paleness, and yon stream?—No! no!
It is not blood; for who would shed his blood?
Abel! what's this?—who hath done this? He moves not;
He breathes not: and his hands drop down from mine
With stony lifelessness! Ah! cruel Cain!
Why cam'st thou not in time to save him from

This violence? Whatever hath assail'd him,
Thou wert the stronger, and should'st have stepp'd in
Between him and aggression! Father!—Eve!—
Adah!—come hither! Death is in the world!

[*Exit* ZILLAH, *calling on her parents, &c.*

CAIN (*solus*).

And who hath brought him there?—I—who abhor
The name of Death so deeply, that the thought
Empoison'd all my life, before I knew
His aspect—I have led him here, and giv'n
My brother to his cold and still embrace,
As if he would not have asserted his
Inexorable claim without my aid.
I am awake at last—a dreary dream
Had madden'd me;—but *he* shall ne'er awake!

Enter ADAM, EVE, ADAH, *and* ZILLAH.

ADAM.

A voice of wo from Zillah brings me here.—
What do I see?—'Tis true!—My son!—my son!
Woman, behold the serpent's work, and thine!

[*To* EVE.

EVE.

Oh! speak not of it now: the serpent's fangs
Are in my heart. My best beloved, Abel!
Jehovah! this is punishment beyond
A mother's sin, to take *him* from me!

ADAM.

Who,
Or what hath done this deed?—speak, Cain, since thou

Wert present; was it some more hostile angel,
Who walks not with Jehovah? or some wild
Brute of the forest?

EVE.

Ah! a livid light
Breaks through, as from a thunder-cloud! yon brand,
Massy and bloody! snatch'd from off the altar,
And black with smoke, and red with——

ADAM.

Speak, my son!
Speak, and assure us, wretched as we are,
That we are not more miserable still.

ADAH.

Speak, Cain! and say it was not *thou!*

EVE.

It was.
I see it now—he hangs his guilty head,
And covers his ferocious eye with hands
Incarnadine.

ADAH.

Mother, thou dost him wrong—
Cain! clear thee from this horrible accusal,
Which grief wrings from our parent.

EVE.

Hear, Jehovah!
May the eternal serpent's curse be on him!
For he was fitter for his seed than ours.
May all his days be desolate! May——

ADAH.

Hold!

Curse him not, mother, for he is thy son—
Curse him not, mother, for he is my brother,
And my betroth'd.

EVE.

He hath left thee no brother—
Zillah no husband—me *no son!*—for thus
I curse him from my sight for evermore!
All bonds I break between us, as he broke
That of his nature, in yon——Oh death! death!
Why didst thou not take *me*, who first incurr'd thee?
Why dost thou not so now?

ADAM.

Eve! let not this;
Thy natural grief, lead to impiety!
A heavy doom was long forespoken to us;
And now that it begins, let it be borne
In such sort as may show our God, that we
Are faithful servants to his holy will.

EVE (*pointing to Cain*).

His will!! the will of yon incarnate spirit
Of death, whom I have brought upon the earth
To strew it with the dead. May all the curses
Of life be on him! and his agonies
Drive him forth o'er the wilderness, like us
From Eden, till his children do by him
As he did by his brother! May the swords
And wings of fiery cherubim pursue him
By day and night—snakes spring up in his path—
Earth's fruits be ashes in his mouth—the leaves
On which he lays his head to sleep be strew'd

With scorpions! May his dreams be of his victim!
His waking a continual dread of death!
May the clear rivers turn to blood as he
Stoops down to stain them with his raging lip!
May every element shun or change to him!
May he live in the pangs which others die with!
And death itself wax something worse than death
To him who first acquainted him with man!
Hence, fratricide! henceforth that word is *Cain*,
Through all the coming myriads of mankind,
Who shall abhor thee, though thou wert their sire!
May the grass wither from thy feet! the woods
Deny thee shelter! earth a home! the dust
A grave! the sun his light! and heaven her God!

[*Exit* EVE.

ADAM.

Cain! get thee forth: we dwell no more together.
Depart! and leave the dead to me—I am
Henceforth alone—we never must meet more.

ADAH.

Oh, part not with him thus, my father: do not
Add thy deep curse to Eve's upon his head!

ADAM.

I curse him not: his spirit be his curse.
Come, Zillah!

ZILLAH.

I must watch my husband's corse.

ADAM.

We will return again, when he is gone
Who hath provided for us this dread office.
Come, Zillah!

ZILLAH.

Yet one kiss on yon pale clay,
And those lips once so warm—my heart! my heart!

[*Exeunt* ADAM *and* ZILLAH *weeping.*

ADAH.

Cain! thou hast heard, we must go forth. I am ready,
So shall our children be. I will bear Enoch,
And you his sister. Ere the sun declines
Let us depart, nor walk the wilderness
Under the cloud of night.—Nay, speak to me,
To *me—thine own.*

CAIN.

Leave me!

ADAH.

Why, all have left thee.

CAIN.

And wherefore lingerest thou? Dost thou not fear
To dwell with one who hath done this?

ADAH.

I fear
Nothing except to leave thee, much as I
Shrink from the deed which leaves thee brotherless.
I must not speak of this—it is between thee
And the great God.

A Voice from within exclaims,

Cain! Cain!

ADAH.

Hear'st thou that voice?

The Voice within.

Cain! Cain!

ADAH.

It soundeth like an angel's tone.

Enter the ANGEL *of the Lord.*

Where is thy brother Abel?

CAIN.

Am I then

My brother's keeper?

ANGEL.

Cain! what hast thou done?
The voice of thy slain brother's blood cries out,
Even from the ground, unto the Lord!—Now art thou
Cursed from the earth, which open'd late her mouth
To drink thy brother's blood from thy rash hand.
Henceforth, when thou shalt till the ground, it shall not
Yield thee her strength; a fugitive shalt thou
Be from this day, and vagabond on earth!

ADAH.

This punishment is more than he can bear.
Behold, thou drivest him from the face of earth,
And from the face of God shall he be hid.
A fugitive and vagabond on earth,
'Twill come to pass, that whoso findeth him
Shall slay him.

CAIN.

Would they could! but who are they
Shall slay me? where are these on the lone earth
As yet unpeopled?

ANGEL.

Thou hast slain thy brother,
And who shall warrant thee against thy son?

ADAH.

Angel of Light! be merciful, nor say
That this poor aching breast now nourishes
A murderer in my boy, and of his father.

ANGEL.

Then he would but be what his father is.
Did not the milk of Eve give nutriment
To him thou now see'st so besmear'd with blood?
The fratricide might well engender parricides.—
But it shall not be so—the Lord thy God
And mine commandeth me to set his seal
On Cain, so that he may go forth in safety.
Who slayeth Cain, a sevenfold vengeance shall
Be taken on his head. Come hither!

CAIN.

What
Would'st thou with me?

ANGEL.

To mark upon thy brow
Exemption from such deeds as thou hast done.

CAIN.

No, let me die!

ANGEL,

It must not be.

[*The* ANGEL *sets the mark on* CAIN*'s brow.*

CAIN.

It burns
My brow, but nought to that which is within it.
Is there more? let me meet it as I may.

ANGEL.

Stern hast thou been and stubborn from the womb,

As the ground thou must henceforth till; but he
Thou slew'st was gentle as the flocks he tended.

CAIN.

After the fall too soon was I begotten;
Ere yet my mother's mind subsided from
The serpent, and my sire still mourn'd for Eden.
That which I am, I am; I did not seek
For life, nor did I make myself; but could I
With my own death redeem him from the dust—
And why not so? let him return to day,
And I lie ghastly! so shall be restored
By God the life to him he loved: and taken
From me a being I ne'er loved to bear.

ANGEL.

Who shall heal murder? what is done is done.
Go forth! fulfil thy days! and be thy deeds
Unlike the last! [*The* ANGEL *disappears.*

ADAH.

He's gone, let us go forth;
I hear our little Enoch cry within
Our bower.

CAIN.

Ah! little knows he what he weeps for!
And I who have shed blood cannot shed tears!
But the four rivers* would not cleanse my soul.
Think'st thou my boy will bear to look on me?

ADAH.

If I thought that he would not, I would—

* The "four rivers" which flowed round Eden, and consequently the only waters with which Cain was acquainted upon the earth.

CAIN (*interrupting her*).

No,
No more of threats: we have had too many of them:
Go to our children; I will follow thee.

ADAH.

I will not leave thee lonely with the dead;
Let us depart together.

CAIN.

Oh! thou dead
And everlasting witness! whose unsinking
Blood darkens earth and heaven! what thou *now* art,
I know not! but if *thou* see'st what *I* am,
I think thou wilt forgive him, whom his God
Can ne'er forgive, nor his own soul.—Farewell!
I must not, dare not touch what I have made thee.
I, who sprung from the same womb with thee, drain'd
The same breast, clasp'd thee often to my own,
In fondness brotherly and boyish, I
Can never meet thee more, nor even dare
To do that for thee, which thou should'st have done
For me—compose thy limbs into their grave—
The first grave yet dug for mortality.
But who hath dug that grave? Oh, earth! Oh, earth!
For all the fruits thou hast render'd to me, I
Give thee back this.—Now for the wilderness.

[ADAH *stoops down and kisses the body of* ABEL.

ADAH.

A dreary, and an early doom, my brother,
Has been thy lot! Of all who mourn for thee,
I alone must not weep. My office is

Henceforth to dry up tears, and not to shed them;
But yet, of all who mourn, none mourn like me,
Not only for thyself, but him who slew thee.
Now, Cain! I will divide thy burden with thee.

CAIN.

Eastward from Eden will we take our way;
'Tis the most desolate, and suits my steps.

ADAH.

Lead! thou shalt be my guide, and may our God
Be thine! Now let us carry forth our children.

CAIN.

And *he* who lieth there was childless. I
Have dried the fountain of a gentle race,
Which might have graced his recent marriage couch,
And might have temper'd this stern blood of mine,
Uniting with our children Abel's offspring!
O Abel!

ADAH.

Peace be with him!

CAIN.

But with *me!*——

[*Exeunt.*

THE END

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